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A Publication of the North Carolina Maritime History Council

Tributaries

OCTOBER 1993 NUMBER 3

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About the Maritime History Council

The North Carolina Maritime History Council came together in 1988 when a group of individuals professionally involved in maritime history programs began meeting informally to share information and to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Aware that the sheer size of the state's coastal area, increasingly rapid development, and the variety of coastal waters have tended to fragment efforts to preserve the state's maritime history, the group began to explore ways to pool the resources of disparate state and federal agencies.

The North Carolina Maritime History Council was incorporated in 1990 with the mission to identify and encourage historical and educational projects that have as their purpose the enhancement and preservation of the state's maritime history and culture, and that create public awareness of that heritage.

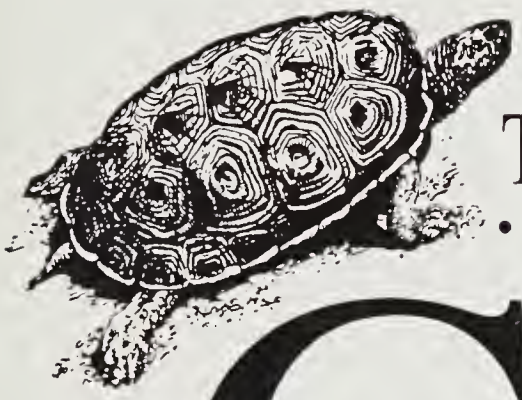
The council views this heritage in broad perspective, noting that its influence extends to the heads of navigation of the state's rivers.

Among its recent accomplishments is the purchase of the Edwin Champney drawings, a collection of fifty-nine sketches of coastal scenes from the Civil War period that were obtained by the council in 1990 using funds donated by the Frank Stick Trust and other non-profit groups. They are now part of the permanent collections of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History and are administered by the Outer Banks History Center. The drawings are available for exhibit to accredited museums throughout the state.

Council membership is limited to non-profit organizations and institutions directly involved in the study and teaching of the state's maritime culture and to selected individuals recognized for outstanding contributions in the field.

Rodney D. Barfield
Chair

"The Aristocracy Must Have Soup": The Terrapin Fishery in Pamlico Sound



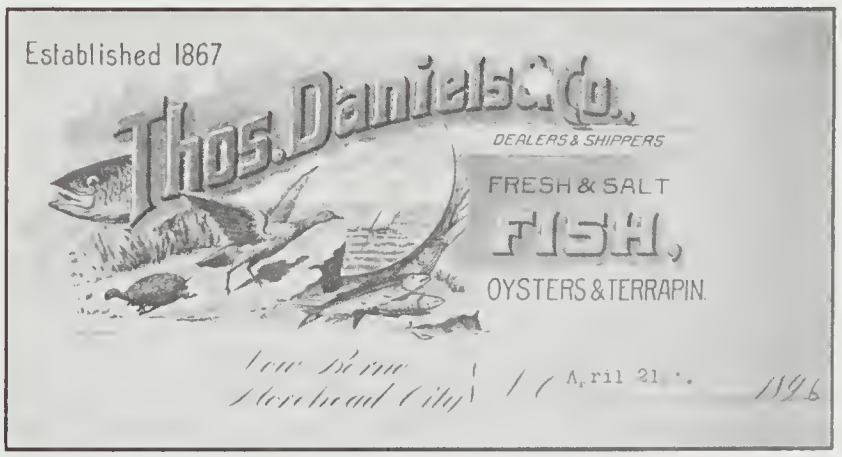
by Kathleen S. Carter

Commercial fisheries in the Pamlico Sound grew dramatically in the late nineteenth century. Before the Civil War, the market for seafood in North Carolina was generally confined to farmers and merchants on the mainland who traded corn for fish or oysters. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, however, Pamlico Sound fishermen took advantage of improvements in transportation and increased consumer demand for seafood.[1]

With the rise of commercial fishing came concern over the future of the sound's fisheries. Catches for some species decreased around the turn of the century, leading to debate over how best to preserve the fisheries. Fishermen and government officials alike worried about decline in any species of marketable seafood, but they became especially alarmed when highly profitable fisheries showed signs of depletion.[2] Oysters, sturgeon, bluefish, and many other species were seen as endangered and therefore targets of concern during the period.[3]

Simply put, the increasing market value of various species often led to greater numbers being harvested. Following this sharp increase in harvest came a decline in catch, followed by state regulation of the fishery. The result was a growing recognition that careful management of the resources of Pamlico Sound would be the key to preservation of a species of great commercial value. This recognition, however, did not always translate into successful restoration of fisheries. The problem was particularly clear in the case of the diamondback terrapin, which became nearly extinct by the early twentieth century in the Pamlico Sound.

In North Carolina, the value of diamondbacks had been recognized since the 1840s, when a few enterprising residents of Roanoke Island began to harvest them commercially. In 1849 for example, Captain John B. Etheridge, keeper of the Bodie Island Lighthouse, sold 4,050 terrapins at Norfolk and Baltimore for a total of $750.[4] Using dredges to scoop terrapins out of the mud during their winter hibernation, traps to catch them while feeding in the sound, or dogs to track them through the salt marshes, fishermen sold huge numbers to markets in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and elsewhere. Observers in the 1880s remarked upon the abundance of terrapins in the Pamlico and Roanoke sounds. The total terrapin catch for the Pamlico and Roanoke sounds in 1880 was reported at 4,000 *counts,* 4,000 *heifers,* and 9,000 *bulls,* with a total value of $3,250.[5] These were harvested in the wild, although some fishermen built *pounds,* also called *crawls,* on the shore of the sound to hold live terrapins taken during the warm months of spring when they were most active. A pound might hold terrapins for months before the owner would send them to market during the fall and winter months of peak demand.[6] In North Carolina waters, the Chesapeake (or Northern) diamondback terrapin shared its habitat with the southern (or Carolina) diamondback terrapin, a separate but very similar subspecies.[7] Both varieties were marketable, although terrapins regarded as "Chesapeake" commanded higher prices in response to the public's belief that diamondbacks native to the Chesapeake Bay tasted better than all others. A market report distributed in 1898 by William B. McCaddin & Co., commission merchants in Baltimore, listed wholesale market prices for "Chesapeake Bay terrapin" as being $4.50 to $5.00 per seven-inch shell, $2.75 to $3.00 per six-inch shell, and $1.25 to $1.50 per five-inch shell, with "North Carolina Terrapin, 20 to 30% less, as to quality."[8]



Letterhead of "Thos. Daniel & Co." seafood supplier, featuring illustration of terrapin at lower left.

(NC Archives and History)

There were ways, however, of enjoying higher profits from the terrapin trade even with terrapins taken from North Carolina waters. North Carolina terrapins,

Chesapeake and southern varieties alike, were shipped to the Chesapeake Bay, held there briefly, and subsequently sold as "true Chesapeake terrapins."[9] This opened the opportunity for greater profits and encouraged even heavier harvesting of a declining species as the market for Pamlico Sound terrapins expanded.[10]

In fact, few seafoods in the late nineteenth century were in greater demand. The diamondback was considered to be a "fancy food article" owing to "the exceptionally fine quality of its meat." A Christmas 1883 dinner menu from the Ebbitt Hotel in Washington, D.C., even featured a verse to honor "Terrapin a la Ebbitt":

> Thou diamond-backed divinity,
> Of all things rich and rare,
> Vain is search for thy affinity
> In water, earth, or air.[12]

The Gilded Age taste for this culinary delicacy outstripped the supply. The 1880s saw profits to fishermen of about $12 to $24 per dozen counts, or females with plastrons six inches or more in length. Counts were by far the most highly sought terrapins; smaller females, called heifers, and males, known as bulls, brought fishermen profits of between $.10 and $.30 each.[13] Prices varied from year to year, and even from month to month in a given season. The weekly Carteret County *Telephone* reported on November 25, 1881 that

> [t]he first terrapin of the season were brought into market on Tuesday last, and were eagerly sought after by our dealers. Quite an animated bidding was indulged in and they were finally knocked down to William F. Dill & Co., at the price of $14.00 per dozen....Bring on your terrapin–The aristocracy must have soup.[14]

On December 23, the *Telephone* reported that the price of terrapins had gone up to $19.50 per dozen, a 39% increase over four weeks.[15]

By the end of the century, the value of terrapins to fishermen had skyrocketed. The scarcity of the species in the 1890s and early twentieth century caused it to become "probably the highest-priced food product of the coast waters." At the turn of the century, six-inch terrapins brought wholesale prices of $30 to $36 per dozen, while seven-inch specimens brought $60 or more per dozen, and eight-inch terrapins commanded a wholesale price of up to $120 per dozen.[16]

The decline of the diamondback was undoubtedly hastened by fishermen determined to take advantage of these prices. A female terrapin took an estimated ten years to reach breeding maturity, yet most counts were harvested at the age of six or seven years.[17]

Another complication was introduced by popular notions of how best to serve terrapin. The two principal methods of preparation were known as Maryland style and Philadelphia style. For Maryland style,

> the Terrapin is first thrown alive into tepid water, the skin and claws are removed; a second immersion in the water follows. The under shell is then cut away and the gall-bladder and liver removed. After this operation the Terrapin is stewed until thoroughly cooked. The stew is then garnished with eggs, cream, butter, and spices, and when ready for the table a little wine is added.[18]

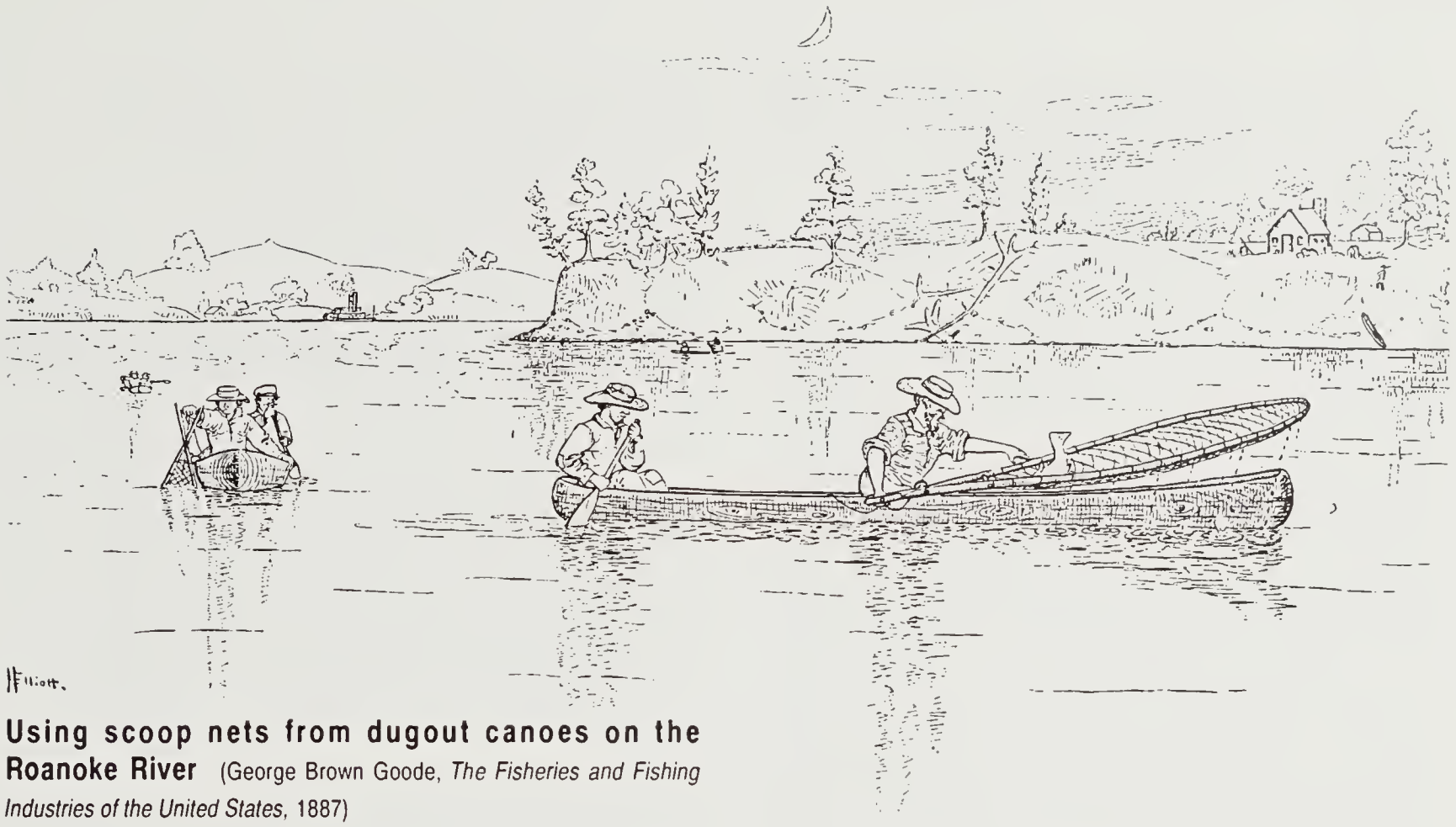
As for Philadelphia style, it was "different from the preceding only in the addition of terrapin eggs, which, in the estimation of epicures, are necessary to complete the dish."[19] The gathering of eggs would not only reduce the number of females reaching maturity, it would also reduce the number of terrapin hatching in any given year.

Hunting terrapin eggs near Beaufort, N.C.

(*NC Geological Survey,* Bulletin 14, Plate X)

During the nineteenth century, North Carolina began to regulate the terrapin fishery. As early as the 1850s, nonresidents were forbidden to harvest terrapins in dragnets. By 1872, a minimum shell size of four inches had been set. An 1881 law provided for an increase in the minimum shell size to five inches, and outlawed the taking and possession of terrapins during breeding season (April 15–August 15) as well as the taking or destroying of terrapin eggs and nests at any time of year. By the turn of the century the penalties were heavy, $5 to $10 per terrapin or egg. The law was nearly unenforceable, however, because terrapins were small enough to be carried in a pocket and therefore could be easily hidden from state inspectors.[20]

Despite these regulatory efforts, the terrapin fishery



Using scoop nets from dugout canoes on the Roanoke River (George Brown Goode, *The Fisheries and Fishing Industries of the United States*, 1887)

was in grave distress. Dr. Robert E. Coker, a biologist commissioned to write a state study on the terrapin in 1906, remarked upon the scarcity of the diamondback:

> So rare and so well concealed are the terrapins that sometimes an expert fisherman may search every day for a week without finding one; again, only one is found on a trip, while another day, half a dozen or even a dozen or more may be obtained.[21]

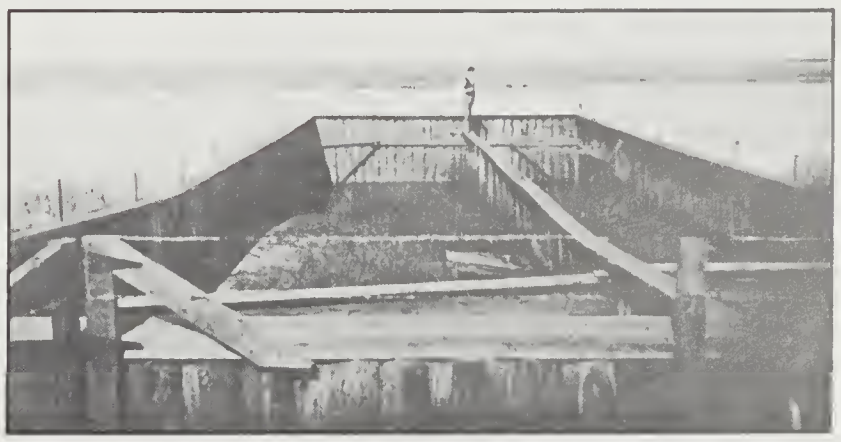
Finding the terrapin in 1906 meant tedious expeditions through the salt marsh in which the fisherman poked a stick into the mud in hope of hitting a terrapin buried two or three inches beneath. Some fishermen preferred to seek out swimming terrapins from a skiff or dugout canoe at high tide and scoop them out of the water with a dip net or dragnet. Others accidentally tonged terrapins up with oysters or caught them in fishing nets.

In the early twentieth century, the North Carolina state officials continued to show concern over the future of the terrapin. Coker's report contained an observation that did not bode well for the species:

> The terrapin has not the power to regain its hold within a few years, as the oyster or the clam might do....The terrapin gets no opportunity to reestablish itself. Though they are now so scarce that it rarely pays to hunt them, yet the market value is such that no chance individual observed will be passed by. In the exhaustive search of our waters for clams, oysters, crabs, and fish, individuals are not infrequently found, and thus the work of extermination proceeds without check.[23]

As for the hope that the terrapin fishery would somehow stabilize on its own, Coker warned, "Exhaustion of the fishery is inevitable, unless some legislative provision be made for its preservation."[24]

The possibility of large-scale cultivation of terrapins in pounds was also being explored in the opening years of the twentieth century. In 1902 researchers at the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries laboratory on Piver's Island near Beaufort built an experimental terrapin pound to study the life cycle of the terrapin. Coker believed that cultivation of terrapins would restore the species and ensure profits to anyone who would undertake such a venture.[25]



Interior view of a terrapin pound, Beaufort, N.C. (*NC Geological Survey*, Bulletin 14, Plate VIII)

To cultivate terrapins in captivity, however, meant an investment of several years before harvest, and conditions in the pounds had to be carefully managed to keep the terrapins healthy for market. Probably for these reasons the cultivation of terrapins remained largely experimental.

Coker argued for rigid enforcement of existing law and for extending the off-season to the period March 1 through August 31, or the most likely time of year for terrapins to be mating, nesting, and moving actively about the marshes. His view was shared by scientists and fishermen who attended a state meeting at Morehead City in 1908 to discuss the future of North Carolina fisheries. The meeting served as a forum for debate on the extent to which the terrapin fishery, along with many others, should be regulated or restricted. Among the many recommendations coming out of this convention was a call for legislation extending the off-season for terrapin harvesting as Coker had advocated.[26]

For the Chesapeake diamondback terrapin, however, restriction of the fishery came far too late. Despite support from some terrapin fishermen, restriction of the fishery was unsuccessful. The number of terrapins in Pamlico Sound continued to decline, and the species never returned to the abundance recorded in the nineteenth century. ✣

Kathleen S. Carter is Assistant Professor of History at High Point University. She earned Masters and Doctorate degrees in history at Duke University and has been in her present position with HPU for five years.

NOTES

1. For a general discussion of the development of commercial fishing on the Outer Banks, see David Stick, *The Outer Banks of North Carolina, 1584-1958* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), especially the chapter entitled "A Living from the Sea," pp. 212-241. See also North Carolina Board of Agriculture, *Handbook of the State of North Carolina Exhibiting Its Resources and Industries* (Raleigh: Ashe and Gatling, 1883), pp. 9 and 141, for a description of changes in transportation that opened the Pamlico Sound as a commercial fishing ground by connecting it with markets to the north and west.

2. The State of North Carolina, for example, published reports throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century on the declining shad industry, which was a mainstay of the coastal Carolina economy. Other reports, on sturgeon, oysters, terrapin, and other species, also mark the period, and transcripts of State Fisheries Conventions held in the opening years of the twentieth century indicate fishermen's concerns.

3. See R. Edward Earll, "North Carolina and Its Fisheries," in George Brown Goode, ed., *The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States*, 5 sections (Washington, D.C.: Commission of Fish and Fisheries, 1884-1887), II, 475-497; North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey Paper No. 16, Joseph Hyde Pratt, comp., *Report of the Convention Called by Governor R.B. Glenn to Investigate the Fishing Industries in North Carolina* (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., 1908), pp. 29-31; North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey Paper No. 29, Joseph Hyde Pratt, comp., *Report of the Fisheries Convention Held at New Bern, North Carolina, December 13, 1911* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1912), pp. 84, 89, and 122. See also an unpublished compilation of fishing yields by species for North Carolina from 1880 to 1969 in the David Stick Collection, Outer Banks History Center, Manteo.

4. See Earll, "North Carolina and Its Fisheries," p. 482.

5. Frederick W. True, "Turtle and Terrapin Fisheries," in Goode, *Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States*, Section V, Vol. 2, p. 484.

6. The mention of an "old terrapin pound" as a marker for staking out a claim of oyster bottom ground in Hyde County, for example, appears on record. See Applications for Franchise to Raise Shellfish, Hyde County, 1888, Secretary of State Papers, North Carolina State Archives. A pound such as this one was probably for holding them until they could be taken to Beaufort for sale of shipping. As late as 1906, biologist Robert E. Coker reported that most terrapins sent to market in North Carolina were taken in the wild in fishing nets or by careful stalking and collecting. This would indicate that there was little to no commercial cultivation of terrapins in Pamlico Sound. See Robert E. Coker, *The Natural History and Cultivation of the Diamond-Back Terrapin*, North Carolina Geological Survey Bulletin No. 14 (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., 1906) pp. 13-14.

7. The Chesapeake diamondback terrapin was called *Malaclemys centrata concentrica* during the period under investigation here, but has since been reclassified as *Malaclemys terrapin terrapin*. The southern diamondback terrapin, *M. centrata centrata* in the taxonomy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is now called *M. terrapin centrata*. See Archie Carr, *Handbook of Turtles: The Turtles of the United States, Canada and Baja California* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. viii, 163, 174.

8. William B. McCaddin & Co. Market Report, December 10, 1898. Prices Current Bulletin Collection, Special Collections Library, Duke University.

9. See Coker, *Natural History and Cultivation of the Diamond-Back Terrapin*, pp. 49ff.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49.

11. True, "Turtle and Terrapin Fisheries," pp. 497-499.

12. Adeline Ellery (Burr) Davis Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University.

13. For a discussion of the market value of terrapins, see Goode, *Fisheries and Fishery Industries in the United States*, Section I, pp. 156-157.

14. Carteret County *Telephone*, November 25, 1881.

15. *Telephone*, December 23, 1881.

16. Coker, *Natural History and Cultivation of the Diamond-Back Terrapin*, p. 47.

17. See Goode, *Fisheries and Fishery Industries in the United States*, Section I, pp. 156-157, for a discussion of breeding maturity. He dismisses the popular notion that female terrapin matured after four years, and cited evidence for a 10-year period before breeding. Given that terrapin shells grew at about one inch per year, the typical harvested "count," with a shell size of six to seven inches, would not be a mature female. If immature females were sought out and harvested, clearly the future of the species was in grave question.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

19. *Ibid.*, Goode also noted that the average terrapin nest contained only five to six eggs (p. 156).

20. *Revised Code of North Carolina*, 1855, p. 450; *Revisal of the Public Statutes of North Carolina Adopted by the General Assembly at the Session of 1872-73*, p. 661; *Code of North Carolina*, 1883, Section 3377; *Revisal of 1905 of the Laws of North Carolina*, Section 2370. On the ease of hiding illegal terrapins, see Coker, *Natural History and Cultivation of the Diamond-Back Terrapin*, p. 54.

21. Coker, *Natural History and Cultivation of the Diamond-Back Terrapin*, pp. 11-16. Coker also remarked that most terrapins taken seemed to be bulls or small females (hens), which brought lower prices on the market than did counts or heifers.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Coker provides detailed information about the management of the experimental pound at Piver's Island throughout his 1906 report.

26. Pratt, *Report of the Convention Called by Governor R.B. Glenn*, p. 31. Other recommendations addressed the need to regulate the shad, sturgeon, and oyster fisheries in particular. ✣

The Forgotten Boatmen:

Navigation on the Dan River, 1792-1892

by Lindley S. Butler

The history of navigation on shallow tributary rivers offers a classic example of a portion of the public transportation story that has been largely forgotten by society and disregarded by historians. In the nineteenth century, river navigation systems, along with canals and harbor improvements, were responsible for significant local and regional economic and population growth. The regional impact of these systems contributed to the development of the nation, and navigation on secondary rivers did not lose its important niche in the national transportation network until the turn of the present century when it was relegated to a minor role by the ubiquitous railroad.

Although there have been a multitude of studies of the colorful and still evident canals, little has been done on secondary river navigation structures. Historians studying navigation companies have concentrated on the canals and have often concluded from the sketchy reports that river improvements consisted of removing snags, sand, and rock obstacles.

Confusion awaits the researcher who examines a river and discovers that both the Indians and the early settlers erected rock fish dams, and these may have been used by the local residents early in this century. The meager documentation is soon exhausted and the historian is forced to pursue the more esoteric procedures of oral tradition, field observation, and archaeology. Archaeologists have shown some interest in fish traps, which quite often were incorporated into navigation systems, but have not established a clear differentiation between fish dams and navigation structures.[1]

Structures related to shallow river navigation have been identified as wing dams, sluices, and hauling walls. Wing dams are usually visible as low piles of stone that direct the flow of water through a channel opening, the width of which may vary from ten to more than thirty feet. Dams are usually found in pairs, forming a V-shaped structure extending from each bank, and in a long rapid there might be several sets. They cannot be readily distinguished from fish dams, and in fact the same structure may have served both purposes. Two methods were used to construct wing dams: one was by piling stone, and the other by building a log crib, which was filled with stone and anchored by wrought iron spikes. Crude river locks were also fashioned from log cribs.[2]

Sluices may be as complex as a lengthy channel created by parallel stone walls or as an opening blasted in a rock ledge. Hauling walls are made of stone, forming one side of a sluice and were used by the boatmen to pull their craft through the rapids.

Tied to Virginia's James River markets by long overland wagon routes, the farmers and merchants of the upper Dan River valley had long dreamed of a navigation system that would make their river an easy commerce route to the outside world. The Dan and the Staunton, tributaries of the Roanoke River, were part of an immense river valley system containing rich alluvial soils that supported large plantations. It was potentially one of the most prosperous regions in the mid-Atlantic states. The rivers straddle the border of Virginia and North Carolina, at first a political hindrance to development. Eventually this was overcome and an interstate navigation project emerged.

The North Carolina General Assembly evinced an early interest in inland navigation improvement. In the November 1785 legislative session, a joint committee examined a model of a boat designed for shallow rivers by Dr. William McClure, a Revolutionary War surgeon.[3] Tentative steps were taken for improvement in the Roanoke valley as early as 1790 with the charter of the Dismal Swamp Company, which proposed a canal from the Albemarle Sound region to the Norfolk area. James Gallaway, a merchant of Rockingham County who served in the North Carolina State Senate, guided the legislation for the canal company through the Senate. In 1784 he had been named a trustee for improvement of navigation on the Dan and Roanoke rivers, and two years later he was appointed to an interstate commission for planning the canal. This canal was not completed until 1814, although portions of it were in use by 1796.[4]

Contemporary evidence for navigation attempts on the unimproved river began in 1791 when William Harrison of Pittsylvania County reported on a voyage up the

[illustration above] **A river bateau**

(William Tatham, *An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco*, London, 1880)

Roanoke and Dan rivers as far as eastern Caswell County made by his brother Thomas.[5] Although the Moravians in Salem had long been interested in navigation on the Dan River, it was not until 1792 that they recorded an attempt to navigate a loaded craft in the upper section of the river valley above Rockingham County. With the aid of high water the trip was completed, proving that the river had potential for commercial transportation.[6] There is no other record of navigation on the upper Dan River at this early date, and it would be two decades before an effort was made to improve the river. These successful voyages, however, stimulated the imaginations of river valley entrepreneurs who shortly commenced development of river towns.

Citizens of Rockingham County petitioned the General Assembly in December 1793, stating that they had "indeavoured to clear the River Dan, so that the produce of the Country may be carried to market by water" and asked that the legislature authorize a commodity and tobacco inspection site at the confluence of the Dan and Smith rivers. The assembly acted to establish a tobacco inspection point at the warehouse of John Leak, who soon had the town of Leaksville surveyed on a bluff overlooking the Dan.[7] In addition to Leaksville, in 1793 Danville was founded at Wynne's Falls, and in 1796 Milton was established in Caswell County.

The city of Danville was destined to become the largest urban center in the valley. While North Carolina lagged behind with internal improvements, the early citizens of Danville were anxious to see navigation on the river. There were two points in the Roanoke and Dan rivers where navigation was impeded by extensive falls and rapids: Weldon on the Roanoke and Danville on the Dan. No improvements were made on the rivers in the early nineteenth century, but an 1801 petition to the Virginia General Assembly for flour inspection at Danville noted that the local flour "...is generally shipped down Dan River."[8]

The obstacles to navigation in the Roanoke River system would not be overcome until North Carolina and Virginia combined resources in the Roanoke Navigation Company. Although abortive efforts to improve the Roanoke were made by Virginia in 1804 and North Carolina in 1812, it was not until 1815 that both state legislatures rechartered the Roanoke Navigation Company and construction began on navigation improvements on the Roanoke, Staunton, and Dan. The North Carolina General Assembly had been stimulated to support river navigation by the visionary state Senator Archibald D. Murphey of Hillsborough, chairman of the Senate committee on internal improvements. In Virginia interest was stirred by the 1816 voyage of Colonel William Lewis, who constructed a boat and piloted it some 340 miles down the Staunton and the Roanoke to Norfolk, proving that navigation was possible.[9]

The chartering of the Roanoke Navigation Company triggered an inflationary boom in the river valley. Land prices skyrocketed at Milton, Danville, and Leaksville, and branches of the state bank were opened in both Milton and Leaksville. Just above the junction of the Mayo and Dan rivers the town of Madison, which had been chartered in 1815, was surveyed and lots were sold by 1818. A new town, Jackson, was proposed in 1819 at Eagle Falls, presumed to be the head of navigation. Illustrative of the expansive atmosphere was a river song, set to the tune of "Yankee Doodle":

> Danville's drunk, Leaksville's sunk.
> Hogtown's all on fire;
> Boats go up to Eagle Falls,
> But can't go any higher.
>
> So clear the way for Jackson Town,
> No others need aspire.
> She's got the coon and pretty soon
> She'll set the world on fire.

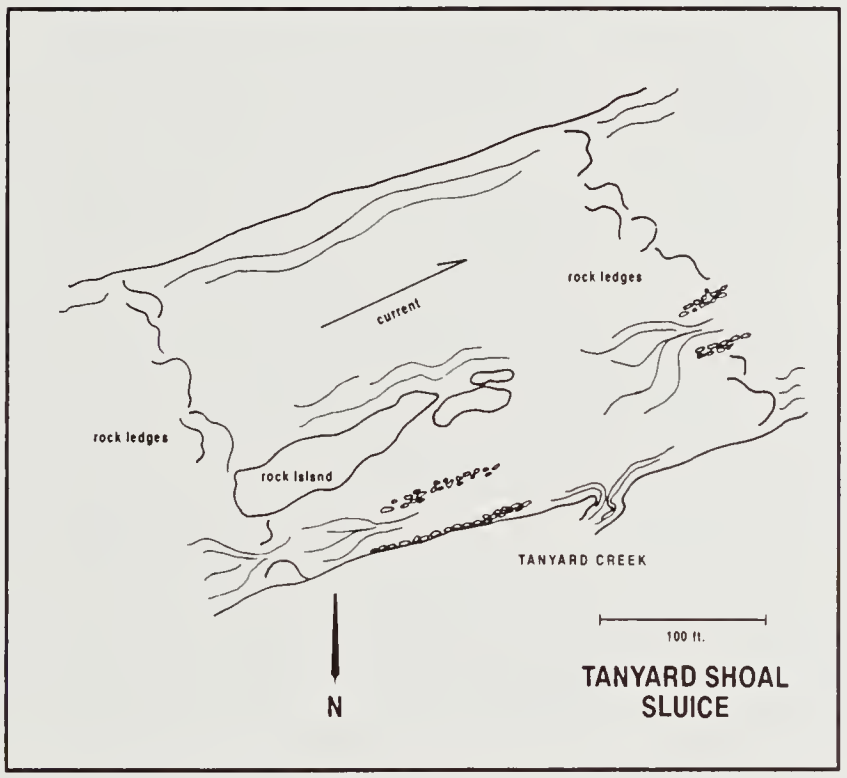
Overzealous promotion of the river towns collapsed with the onset of the Panic of 1819. At Jackson, where little more than a lot auction had occurred, the whole scheme failed and the town was never built.[10] The navigation company, however, was undaunted and proceeded with removal of snags and construction of sluices and wing dams.

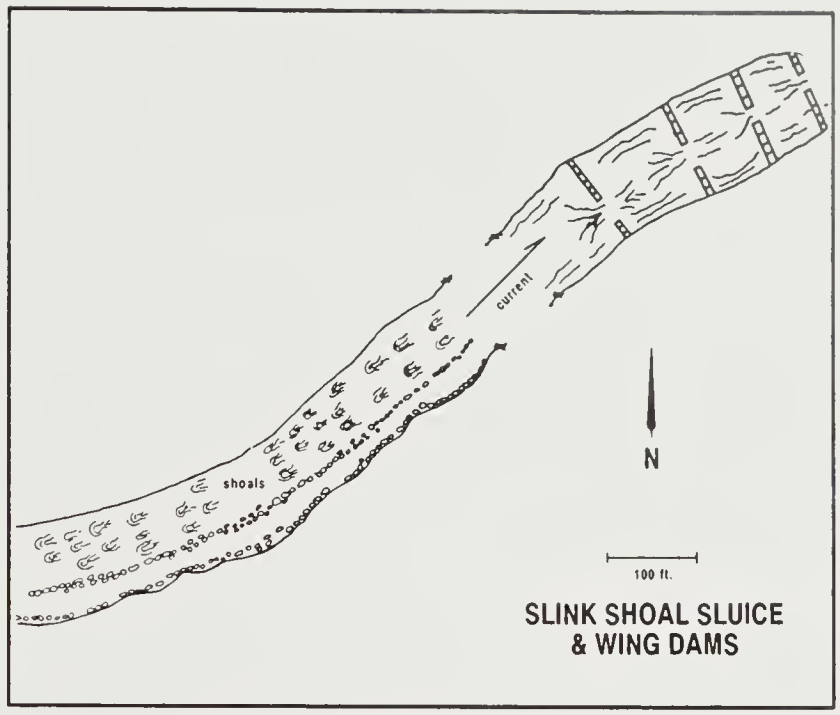
Despite the economic setback the state continued its policy of internal improvements inspired by Archibald Murphey. In 1819 the state hired a Scottish engineer, Hamilton Fulton, to design and oversee a comprehensive development program. Fulton and his assistant Robert H.B. Brazier had been students of the great Scottish engineer John Rennie, and Fulton had gained experience under Thomas Telford. Fulton began his survey on the coast but soon became disillusioned by the political infighting and apathy. Despite declining support for his work he oversaw construction of the Roanoke Canal in 1822-23, but by 1826 he resigned and went to Georgia.[11] His chief legacy to the state is the Roanoke Canal Aqueduct over Chockoyotte Creek which was begun in 1821.

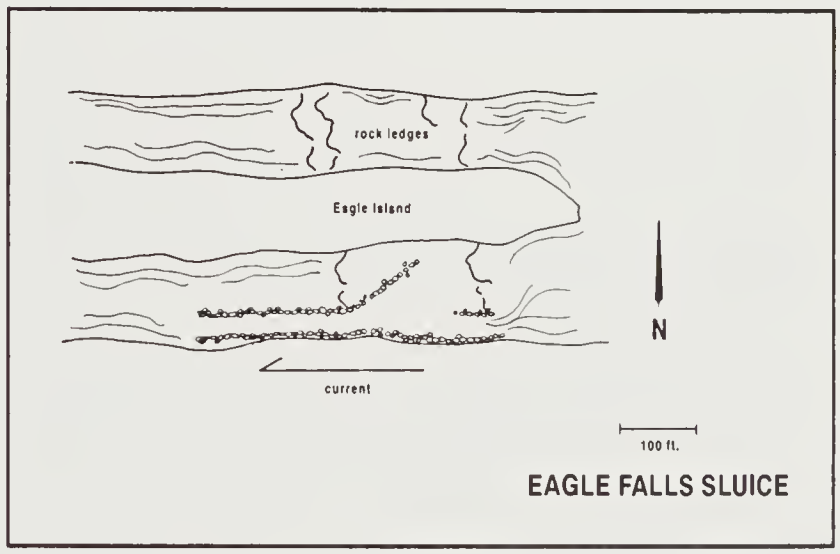
With the Fulton designs complete, improvement of the extensive falls and rapids at Weldon became the major objective of the Roanoke Navigation Company. By 1823 the canal was complete to a bateau basin at Weldon. During this period in May and June 1819, Captain Walter Coles of Pittsylvania County made a journey from Danville to Norfolk by water. Reaching Rock Landing at the head of the Roanoke Rapids canal in four days, Coles then transferred to another boat at Weldon to complete the voyage.[12]

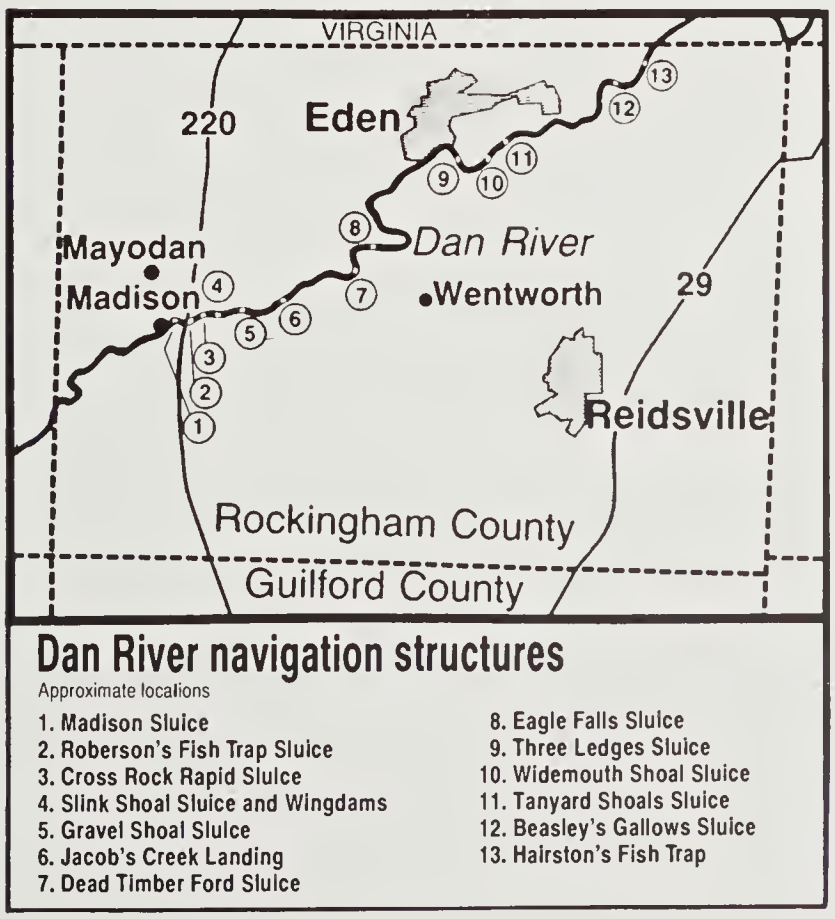
In 1823 the company sent Isaac Briggs, an engineer, to survey the upper river, and his report recommended a

canal and locks at Danville and dams and sluices for the Dan and Staunton. By 1826 the Dan was open to Leaksville, a distance of 152 miles from the canal at Weldon. The key to opening this section was the completion of the Danville canal, and within another two years the town of Madison was reached. The improvements on the Dan, constructed by slave labor, consisted of wing dams and sluices with a width of twelve to fifteen feet.[13]









Source: Lindley Butler (Staff graphic, Greensboro *Daily News*)

The nineteenth century navigation system was designed for both bateaux and small steamboats. A bateau was a double-ended, shallow-draft, flat-bottomed craft up to sixty feet long with an eight-foot beam, drawing no more than eighteen inches of water. Steered by long sweeps on the bow and stern, these boats could carry up to twelve thousand pounds of cargo, or a dozen half-ton hogsheads of tobacco. A similar type of craft apparently was patented in Virginia by Anthony Rucker in 1775.[14]

The cargoes run downstream usually consisted of bulk agricultural products: tobacco, flour, and grains, which were staple crops of the region. The upstream voyages carried a diverse cargo of mercantile stock for the stores in the river towns. From 1828 to 1830 Danville merchants Dickerson and Pannill & Co. ordered a great variety of merchandise, including sugar, herring, coffee, glass, sperm and tallow candles, tea, molasses, steel, salt petre, alum, pottery, cotton yarn, rice, and millstones. In January 1851 a boat owned by G.Y. Nichols bound from Gaston upriver to South Boston carried nails, molasses,

boxes, barrels, buckets, sifters, sugar, coffee, rice, and sundries.[15] The few surviving merchants' letters indicate a trade network that encompassed hundreds of miles from the James River valley at Richmond down to Norfolk through the Dismal Swamp Canal, across Albemarle Sound and up the Roanoke and Dan rivers. Samuel Pannill wrote from the James River to his partners in Danville in 1829 describing his purchase of salt to be shipped from Richmond by Norfolk and the reciprocal movement of flour and tobacco down the Dan River.[16]

Although the number of crew varied with the length of the craft and the weight of the cargo, the normal crew on the Roanoke and Dan river boats was three. The boats were laboriously poled upstream by two men with the third man on the sweep to guide the craft. The crewmen were usually slaves, and after the Civil War free blacks. Some whites, however, owned boats and piloted them on the river. Many of the cargo manifests are signed by slaves with a mark and single names such as Anthony or Erasmas. The only known bateaumen who lived in Rockingham County were the blacks Isham Brodnaux, Jack Brodnaux, and Robert Brodnaux, and Elijah Lynch, a white. In 1840 Dr. Edward Brodnax had two slave boatmen and Thomas S. Gallaway had one. In 1850 three boatmen were living in Caswell County: William Watkins and William Mitchell, who were white, and John Freeman, a black.[17]

Evidence of life aboard these boats was scant until excavation of the Richmond canal boat basin came about as a result of a construction project in 1983. In the excavation, six different canal boats and bateaux, dating from the 1790s to the 1850s, were unearthed, recorded, and partially salvaged by members of the Virginia Canals and Navigations Society. Subsequent excavations in 1984 and 1985 uncovered parts of an additional twenty-eight boats and bateaux. Details taken from these boats enabled a reproduction, the *Columbia,* to be built, and in 1984 she had her maiden voyage to Richmond. The *Columbia* inspired more construction, which in 1986 led to the first annual James River bateau race.[18]

The sixteen-foot stern section of a bateau that became known as the "hearth" boat revealed considerable detail about life on the river. Nineteenth century illustrations had shown hooped canopies covering the cargo and crew areas of the boats, but little was known about how the men lived. The hearth boat had a square brick cooking platform and intact plank "walking boards," which probably also served for sleeping.[19] Gradually a portrait of a previously unknown segment of slave and free black life is emerging. Slave crews, with no white supervision, were given the responsibility of a valuable boat and cargo and sent on a voyage of three to four weeks (two weeks upriver from Weldon to Danville and one week down river). Although records give no idea of the number of boatmen, James Brewer's study of the Confederate Negro in Virginia documented several hundred slave and free black boatmen involved in the war effort, primarily on the James River.[20]

Steam navigation on the Dan River was limited by the narrow and shallow channel. The only known boat on the river in the antebellum period was a small excursion boat, *The Lily of the Dan,* owned by Dr. T.L. Sydnor of Danville. The vessel's log reveals that it was a two-day trip upriver to Madison, and one day to return. In 1855 a prospectus was issued for the Dan River Steam Navigation Company for the purpose of raising money to build commercial steam tow boats.[21] Although there is no indication that the company operated boats on the upper Dan River, a steamboat described in the *Milton Spectator* in 1854 by company engineer Marshall Parks apparently ran from Danville down to Milton and Clarksville.[22]

In 1874 the state legislature chartered the Dan River Navigation Company for the purpose of improving the river for steamboats from Danville to Danbury in Stokes County where the Morotock Ironworks was located. This company was led by James Turner Morehead, an industrialist and developer of Leaksville, and it was obligated to operate steamboats within two years. A Danville journal notes in an entry on April 28, 1874, that the Leaksville steamboat had arrived in the city, indicating that the new navigation company had succeeded in bringing steam power back to the river.[23]

Morehead also operated a bateau line in conjunction with his steamboat, and a letter from his son describes a bateau voyage to Madison from Leaksville in the early 1880s. With the advent of steam power, however, references to bateau travel became increasingly sparse. In the last decade of navigation newspapers only occasionally mentioned bateaux, which were being rented by church groups for excursions and Sunday school picnics.[24]

Possibly stimulated by the influential Morehead, a survey of the Dan River from Clarksville, Virginia to Danbury was authorized by the federal government in 1878. This survey, conducted by the engineer S.T. Abert, produced detailed reports in 1879 and 1880. Abert hired two bateaux, had cabins constructed on them, and used them throughout the survey. As a result of the survey, the River and Harbor Act of 1880 included the first appropriation of $10,000 for improvement of the Dan River from Danville to Madison. By 1888, when the final appropriation was expended, a total of $40,500 had been spent on the navigation system, and the structures existing today are the work of Abert. Abert added a few new sluices, but primarily he widened and deepened the old bateau channels to accommodate steamboats.[25]

It is ironic that the extensive work done by the federal government was finished about the time the railroad had reached the upper Dan River valley, dooming river navigation. Railroads had altered the navigation pattern as early as 1833 when the Petersburg Railroad reached the

Roanoke River valley near Weldon enabling cargoes to move from the upper James River to the Roanoke valley and avoid the long voyage through Norfolk. By 1855 the Richmond and Danville Railroad was completed to Danville, which then became the terminus for the upper valley, and only the upper Dan River valley remained dependent on the bateau and overland wagon traffic.

In addition to his involvement in river development, James Turner Morehead also was interested in railroads, and in December 1883, the first train arrived in Leaksville from Danville on the narrow-gauge Danville, Mocksville, and Southwestern Railroad. By 1889 a branch line of the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, also spurred by Morehead, reached Madison. Finally, in 1891, the Roanoke and Southern Railroad was completed from Roanoke to Winston-Salem down the Mayo River valley through Madison.[26]

By 1891, with the upper Dan River valley tapped by three railroads, commercial navigation was no longer feasible. The days of the river bateaumen were over. For a few years they found intermittent employment on recreational charter trips, but it was no longer possible to make a living on the river. The bateaux vanished, leaving no apparent physical trace in the valley that they had ever existed. They became only vague memories to the valley people. No more were the sleek craft seen gracefully cutting through the water. No more were the boatmen heard singing their river songs. But the canals, the locks, the landings, the sluices, and the wing dams remained to be rediscovered and appreciated, nearly a century later, as visible reminders of a colorful era on the river. ✣

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NOTES

1. See Horace P. Hobbs, Jr. "Rock Dams in the Upper Potomac," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*, 18 (March 1964), 55-60; 19 (June 1965), 96-98; and Carl H. Strandberg and Ray Tomlinson, "Photoarchaeological Analysis of Potomac River Fish Traps," *American Antiquity*, 34 (July 1969), 312-319.

2. William E. Trout III, "Historic Sites in Stream Beds," *American Canals* (August 1975), 7.

3. Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina*, 16 vols. (Winston & Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1895-1905), XVII, 280-282; XX, 7-8. See William L. Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886-1890), X, 621-622; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, XVI, 470-471, 625-626, 930-931 for McClure's controversial wartime career.

4. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, XVIII, 56, 94; XXI, 614; XXIV, 600; XXV, 83, 91; Philip M. Rice, "The Early Development of the Roanoke Waterway: A Study in Interstate Relations," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XXXI (January 1954), 53, 55, 56.

5. William S. Powell, *When the Past Refused to Die: A History of Caswell County, 1777-1977* (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1977), 510-511.

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7. Legislative Petitions, North Carolina General Assembly Session Records, 1793, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh; Lindley S. Butler, *Rockingham County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1982), 23.

8. Maud C. Clement, *The History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell Company, 1929), 233.

9. Rice, "Roanoke Waterway," 59-60; Clement, *Pittsylvania County*, 236. Murphey's reports on internal improvements are in William H. Hoyt (ed.), *The Papers of Archibald D. Murphey*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1914) II, 35-48, 133-142; Clifford R. Hinshaw, "North Carolina Canals Before 1860." *North Carolina Historical Review*, XXV (January 1948), 33-35.

10. Charles D. Rodenbough, "'Jackson Town' Fraud or Honest Speculation," *Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy*, 1 (April 1976): 1-12.

11. George Stevenson, "Hamilton Fulton," in William S. Powell (ed.), *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 4 vols. to date (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979-), 2, pp. 215-216; *Annual Report of the Board of Public Improvements of North Carolina to the General Assembly* (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1822), 36-54.

12. Clement, *Pittsylvania County*, 237-238; William E. Trout III, "The Roanoke Navigation: Taming the River of Death," *Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy*, 3 (October 1978), 42-44, 47.

13. Trout, "Roanoke Navigation," 47-48; *Report of the Roanoke Navigation Company*, 1830, p. 2; Isaac Briggs, "Report to the Virginia Board of Public Works by the Roanoke Navigation Company" (Richmond: Roanoke Navigation Company, February 12, 1823).

14. S.T. Abert, "Survey of the Dan River between Danbury, North Carolina and Danville, Virginia" (Washington: United States Engineers Office, July 15, 1879); Clement, *Pittsylvania County*, 239; Trout, "Roanoke Navigation," 53, 56.

15. Bateaux cargo manifests, May 14, 1828; April 22, 1830; October 15, 1840; April 7, 1865, Robert Wilson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Bateau cargo manifest, G.Y. Nichols, January 14, 1851, in possession of the author.

16. Samuel Pannill to Dickinson, Pannill & Co., Green Hill, Virginia, February 6, 1829, Robert Wilson Papers.

17. Cargo manifests, Robert Wilson Papers; Nichols Manifest; United States Census, Rockingham County, North Carolina, 1840, 1870, 1880; Powell, *Caswell County*, 511.

18. Bill Trout, "VC & NS Unearths Canal Boats," *The Tiller*, 4, pp. 1-4;"Columbia's 88-mile Voyage," *The Tiller*, 5, pp. 3-4; "More Canalboats Discovered During Our Third Great Basin Excavation," *The Tiller*, 6, pp. 1-2.

19. Trout, "VC & NS Unearths Canal Boats," 2.

20. James H. Brewer, *The Confederate Negro: Virginia's Craftsmen and Military Laborers, 1861-1865* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969), 18, 23, 27.

21. *The Dan River Steam Navigation Company* (Baltimore: John W. Woods, 1855), North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

22. Powell, *Caswell County*, 511-512.

23. *Laws of North Carolina, 1874-1875,* 688; "Notebook of Jacob Davis, 1855-1875," Danville Public Library.

24. John M. Morehead to Nancy W. Watkins, New York, April 9, 1957, Morehead-Nelson Papers, Special Collections, Rockingham Community College; *Webster's Dollar Weekly* (Reidsville), June 5, 1884.

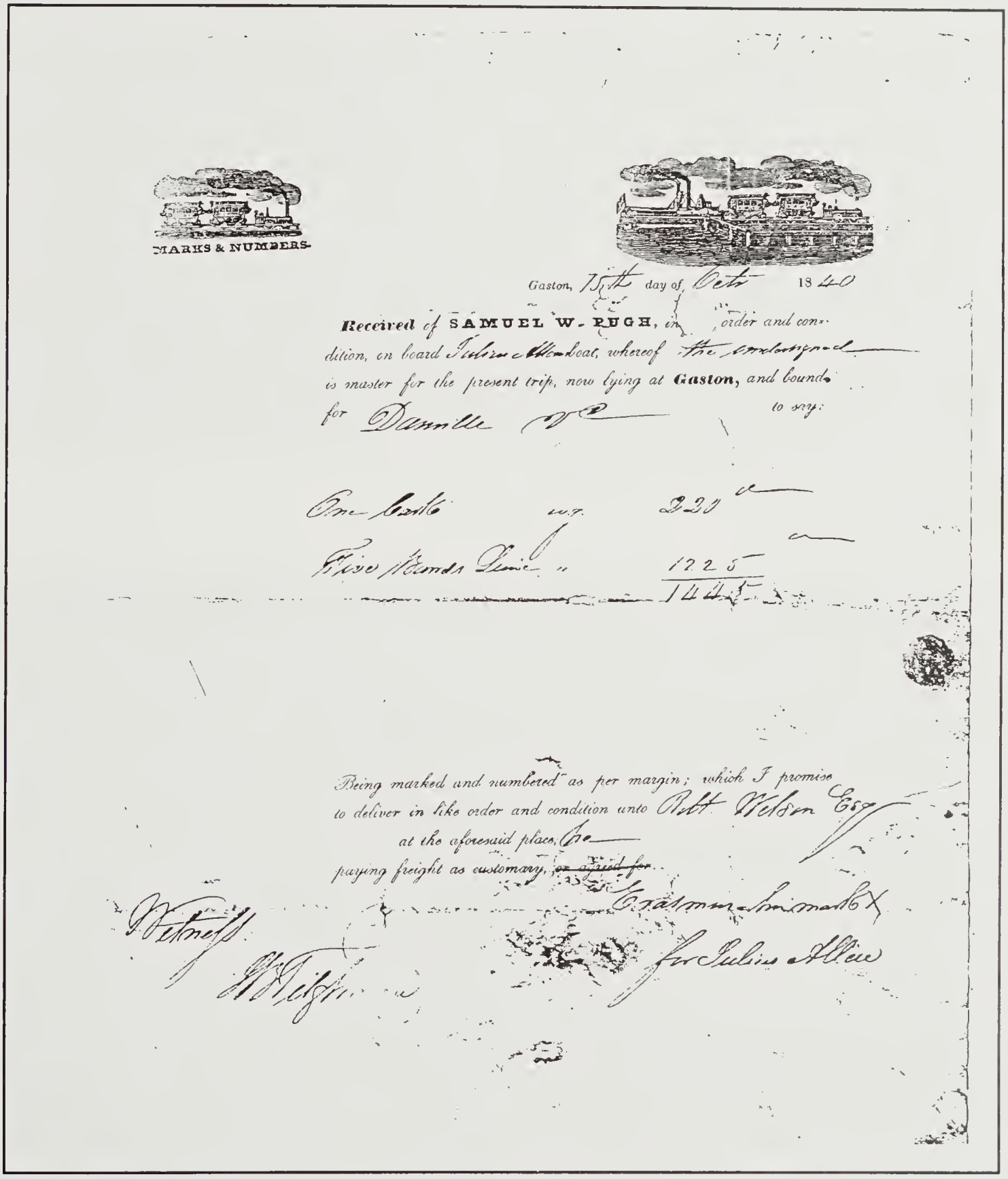
25. S.T. Abert to the Chief of Engineers, Washington, January 17, 1879; July 26, 1884; December 2, 1884; August 18, 1886; July 23, 1888, National Archives Record Group 77; *Sketches of the County of Rockingham, N.C.* (Leaksville: *Leaksville Gazette*, 1884), reprinted in *Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy*, 6 (June 1891), 17.

26. *Sketches of Rockingham County,* 17, 28; Butler, *Brief History,* 61-62, 65; Ola M. Foushee, "The Railroad Comes to the Mayo Valley," *Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy,* 2 (April 1977), 27-39. ✣

A View of History:

Reminders of a Colorful Era

compiled by Lindley S. Butler



MARKS & NUMBERS

Gaston, 15th day of Octr 1840

Received of SAMUEL W. PUGH, in order and condition, on board Julius Allen boat, whereof the undersigned is master for the present trip, now lying at Gaston, and bound for Danville Va to say:

One Cask w.g. 220

Five Bands Lime " 1225

1445

Being marked and numbered as per margin; which I promise to deliver in like order and condition unto Robt Wilson Esq at the aforesaid place, he paying freight as customary, ~~or agreed for~~

Erasmus his mark X

for Julius Allen

Witness

1840 cargo manifest bearing the signature (his mark) of Erasmus, the captain, and Julius Allen, owner. (Robert Wilson Papers, #1882, Southern Historical Collection, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)

Sluice walls and wing dam at Slink Shoal, constructed by S.T. Abert, c. 1885 (Lindley Butler)

Wing dams constructed with log cribs by S.T. Abert, c. 1885, at Slink Shoal on the Dan River (Lindley Butler)

Another view of Slink Shoal wing dams and sluice (Lindley Butler)

Bateau on the Haw River (*State*, June 20, 1953)

Mouzon 1775 (NC Archives and History)

Pilotage and Pilots in Colonial North Carolina:

The Case of Ocracoke Inlet

by Alan D. Watson

Given its extensive Atlantic coastline and the development of an export sector marked by naval stores, wood products, and foodstuffs, colonial North Carolina early exhibited a seagoing commerce. However the Outer Banks, which guard the coast from the Virginia border to Cape Lookout, greatly impeded trade by rendering communication with the interior of the colony difficult. Although inlets offered ingress to sounds, shifting channels of changing depths made those passages dangerous. Moreover, extensive distances from the inlets, through the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds, to ports on the mainland entailed lengthy, and therefore expensive, even dangerous, voyages.[1]

Indispensable to North Carolina's ocean commerce were the pilots who directed ships through inlets and across sounds. Such men early appeared to guide incoming and outgoing vessels, but were recognized formally by the colonial government only in 1715, when the General Assembly of the province attempted to promote maritime trade by legislation to appoint and maintain pilots at Roanoke and Ocracoke inlets.[2] That statute inaugurated a pilotage system that serves North Carolina to the present, though this paper intends to trace its development only at Ocracoke Inlet during the colonial era.

As North Carolina found markets in other English coastal colonies of North America, the West Indies, and eventually the mother country, small port towns appeared to serve as conduits of trade. Bath Town, the first incorporated entity (1705-1706), was followed in the next three and a half decades by New Bern, Beaufort, Edenton, Brunswick Town, and Wilmington. Due to the presence of the barrier islands, Bath Town, New Bern, Beaufort, and Edenton arose on the colony's protected mainland, usually on or near a river that allowed the town to draw upon interior trade. Brunswick Town and Wilmington were strictly river ports, established on the banks of the Cape Fear River.[3]

Eventually many of the towns became centers of customs districts established by the British for the purpose of regulating trade. By 1731 the British had divided North Carolina into five such districts: ports Currituck, Roanoke, Bath, Beaufort, and Brunswick. There was no definite seat for the customs officials of Port Currituck. Edenton served as the focus for Port Roanoke, Bath Town for Port Bath, Beaufort for Port Beaufort (including New Bern), and Brunswick Town for Port Brunswick (including Wilmington).[4]

The location of the ports, at least above the Cape Fear, required shipping to seek inlets cutting through the Outer Banks to reach the interior. Of the several ingress points prior to the Revolution, the most significant were Currituck, Roanoke, Beaufort, and Ocracoke inlets. Because North Carolina was settled first by Virginians extending their southern and eastern frontier into the Albemarle region, Currituck and Roanoke inlets assumed immediate importance. Old Currituck Inlet closed by 1731 however, and New Currituck Inlet could accommodate only light-draft ships. Roanoke Inlet at the eastern end of the Albemarle Sound was ideally placed, but shallow waters and shifting channels made it dangerous. Beaufort Inlet or Old Topsail Inlet offered access mainly to the town of Beaufort and the Core Sound-Bogue Sound region.[5]

As the habitation of the North Carolina coast moved southward to the Pamlico and Neuse-Trent areas, Ocracoke Inlet quickly became the preferred access to most of the mainland above the Cape Fear. According to Governor George Burrington in 1731, ships usually avoided Roanoke Inlet in order to use the inlet at Ocracoke. Of course there remained the necessity of traversing the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds to reach the ports of Edenton, Bath Town, and New Bern, which, in conjunction with seeking a cargo, could mean a sojourn of several weeks for vessels trading with the province.[6]

The law enacted in 1715 required the governor to designate a pilot for Ocracoke Inlet and also directed the pilot to maintain a suitable boat, keep two assistants, and use his "best endeavours to look for & repair on board" all vessels bound into the inlet. The pilot also was to direct incoming vessels to their desired river destinations on the mainland. In adverse weather the pilot was instructed to inform ships of the inlet channel via signals. If negligent, the pilot assumed responsibility for damages and losses sustained by vessels under his supervision.

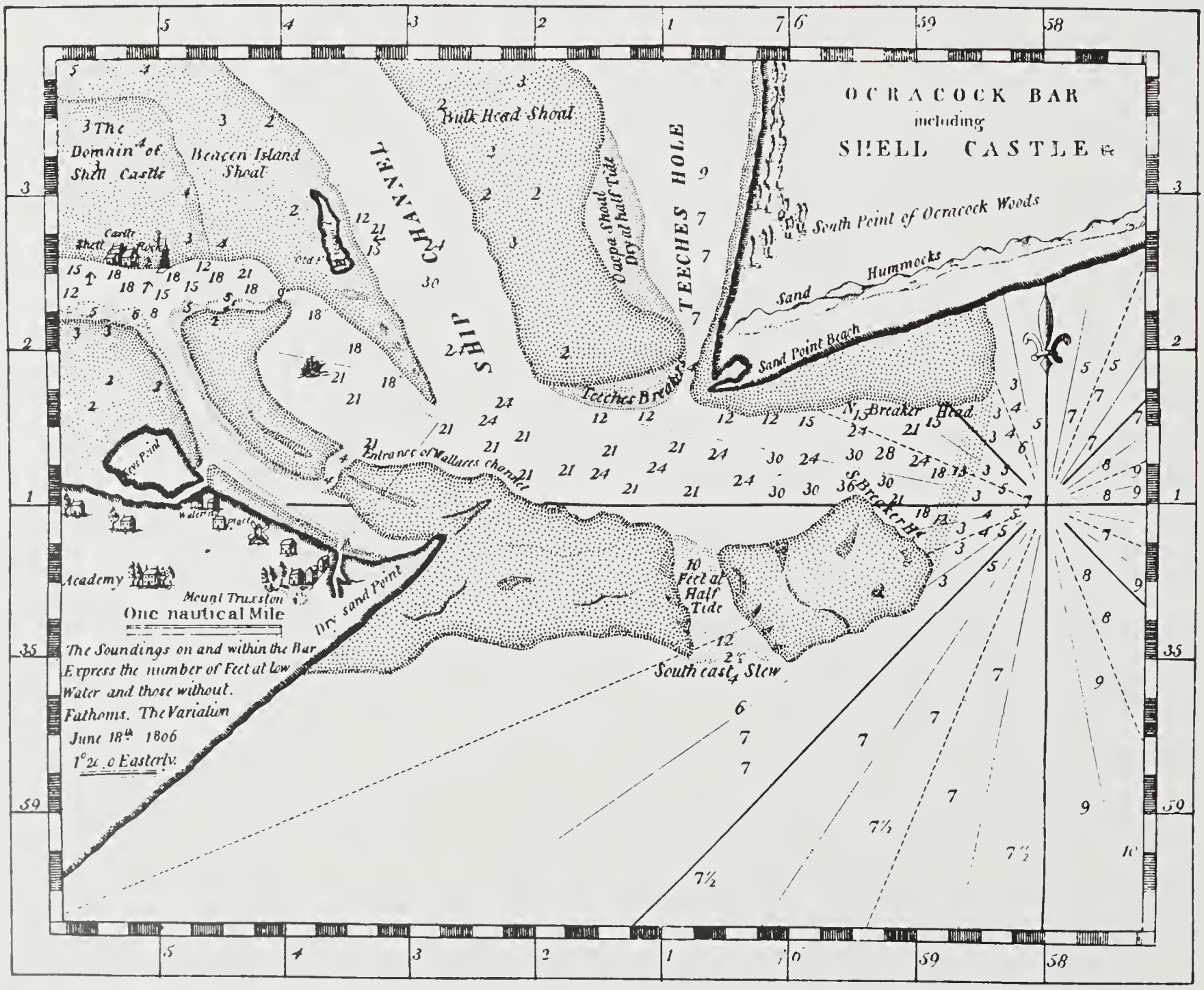
The legislature offered compensation intended to

entice and retain competent pilots. In addition to enjoying a monopoly over the traffic at Ocracoke Inlet, the pilot received thirty shillings sterling for each vessel drawing six feet of water or less, and ten shillings more per foot above six feet draft. After a year's experience and upon certification by "able & experienced Commissioners" appointed by the governor, the pilot might be paid an additional thirty pounds sterling.[8]

Although the original pilotage legislation was repealed in 1732, the General Assembly re-instituted the system in 1738-1739, but with a different perspective. Rather than rely upon fees to compensate the pilot, the legislature appointed commissioners for ports Roanoke and Bath, for New Bern, and for Old Topsail Inlet, whose duty it was to hire pilots for Ocracoke Inlet and provide them with two boats appropriate for pilotage duties. After offering a surety bond for proper performance, the pilots would take ships across the bar and to interior ports. The pilots were also to maintain buoys and beacons marking the channels, and report any alteration of the channels to the commissioners.[9]

The General Assembly next addressed pilotage at Ocracoke in 1752, contending that poorly marked inlets and the "Insufficiency and Neglect of Pilots" militated against shipping. Combining features of the previous statutes, the legislature appointed commissioners for the port districts of Roanoke, Bath, and Beaufort, and required the commissioners to stake shipping channels and license pilots in their respective districts. The law prescribed pilotage fees based on the draft of ships for directing vessels through the inlet, and for taking them to and from Edenton, Bath, and New Bern.[10]

The General Assembly again considered pilotage at Ocracoke Inlet in 1766, altering the details of the established system. Commissioners continued to license pilots, requiring them to post a surety bond with the commis-



Map showing Ocracoke Inlet, Shell Castle Island, and environs (Thomas Coles and Johnathan Price, "A Chart of the Coast of North Carolina between Cape Hatteras & Cape Fear from a Survey taken in the Year 1806," Library of Congress)

Ocracoke Inlet from Moseley 1733 (NC Archives and History)

sioners. The new law not only raised pilotage fees but allowed full fees to pilots who crossed the bar to assist a ship even if the master refused pilotage services. Moreover, if a ship were driven off the coast by adverse winds after a pilot had boarded, the pilot was entitled to two shillings and eight pence per day in addition to the usual fees. Conversely, the enactment subjected pilots to a stiff penalty if they failed to respond to a vessel seeking assistance.[11]

Ultimately pilots assumed a social responsibility to the colony for guarding the health of the residents of North Carolina. The legislature required the pilots to notify port commissioners of incoming vessels carrying persons afflicted with smallpox or other contagions. The commissioners might then require such ships to ride quarantine. Of course pilots worked under the ever present threat of fines for failing to report offending vessels. In effect pilots became the first line of defense against the importation of devastating communicable diseases.[12]

The appearance of legally-appointed pilots at Ocracoke Inlet is moot, for the records do not indicate that Governor Charles Eden or his immediate successors utilized the 1715 legislation insofar as it related to Ocracoke. In fact, Governor George Burrington noted in 1731 that the legislation of 1715 had been virtually ignored. Burrington, however, proceeded to designate pilots for Ocracoke. Indeed, given the traffic through the inlet, Burrington wanted to make Ocracoke the official port of entry for the northern coast of North Carolina rather than use the customs offices in Currituck, Edenton, Bath Town, and Beaufort. The governor felt that forcing ships to enter and clear at Ocracoke would allow royal customs officials and colonial commissioners to better monitor commerce and collect various maritime taxes and impositions.[13]

Within a decade of Burrington's appointments, Ocracoke pilots directed not only small coastal craft but such vessels as the 210-ton snow *Mary and Mariane*

(sometimes *Maryane*). Arriving at Ocracoke in August 1740 from Providence, Jamaica by way of Port Royal (Beaufort, South Carolina), the *Mary and Mariane* was taken across the bar by John Oliver and then to Edenton by Timothy Yealls. At that juncture Governor Gabriel Johnston engaged the snow, replete with twelve guns and a crew of ten, to take North Carolinians to the West Indies. There they would rendezvous with other English colonials for a planned attack on the Spanish stronghold Cartagena in an action that was part of the Anglo-Spanish War of Jenkins' Ear.[14]

Pilots may have been reluctant to accept appointments at Ocracoke, for they suffered the harsh demands of nature as they eked out a living by fishing, whaling, and grazing livestock while waiting for vessels. Theirs was often a lonely existence on sparsely inhabited Ocracoke Island and Core Banks. Gradually however, as the colony grew, more residents settled on the banks, and as seen by the preambles to the various laws regulating pilotage, the province deemed pilots indispensable to the promotion of trade.

The colony not only tried to entice and retain pilots by continuously increasing pilotage fees, but the 1738-1739 legislation by the General Assembly authorized port commissioners to build a house on Ocracoke Island for the pilots. Over the years that privilege lapsed. In 1766 the pilots on Ocracoke reminded the legislature that in the past land had been offered to them for maintaining houses and, they claimed, pilot boats. Thus, the General Assembly ordered the commissioners of the ports of Roanoke, Bath, and Beaufort to acquire by eminent domain twenty acres on Ocracoke Island appropriately situated for the pilots, to be paid for by fees collected at the respective ports. The commissioners might then lease a lot from the twenty-acre plot to each Ocracoke pilot desiring land.[15]

The area designated for the pilots, Pilot Town or Ocracoke Village, lay north of Ocracoke Inlet on Ocracoke Island and included the town of Portsmouth on Core Banks south of the inlet. Although Ocracoke Inlet offered the best entree into North Carolina above Beaufort, a shoal area called the Swash (also Swatch or Swath) at the junction of the inlet and Pamlico Sound stymied larger vessels, which were obliged to anchor in the harbor adjoining Core Banks and lighter their cargo in smaller vessels.[16]

Lightering necessitated wharves, warehouses, and other facilities on Core Banks, which in turn prompted legislation in 1753 incorporating the town of Portsmouth to provide those services. Portsmouth became the most significant of the villages on the Outer Banks in the late eighteenth century, numbering 246 residents in 1800. As was the case of every North Carolina town, taverns were among the first structures to appear after incorporation. One of the earliest in Portsmouth belonged to Carteret County justice of the peace Valentine Wade. In 1759, John Bragg, a pilot living either in Pilot Town or Portsmouth, and another resident complained that Wade allowed "disorderly persons, to dance and play at cards and dice in his house (tavern) upon the Lords Day." As a result the governor's council stripped Wade of his commission of the peace, after which he continued to operate his tavern.[17]

Bragg expressed concern for more than morality, or the lack of it, on the banks. Inhabiting the area around Ocracoke Inlet were blacks, some slave, others free, who offered their services as pilots to take ships back and forth from the bar to Edenton, Bath Town, and New Bern. Bragg and seven other Ocracoke pilots petitioned Governor Josiah Martin in 1773 to estop the practice of black pilotage. They contended that it not only offered unfair competition for the legally appointed pilots at Ocracoke but contributed to "Great Confusion and Irregularity" in the waterborne commerce of the region.[18]

Although the number of pilots at Ocracoke on the eve of the American Revolution is indeterminate, there were at least the eight petitioners of 1773 and their unwanted black compatriots who attempted to contend with the considerable shipping through the inlet. Competent men, white and black, proved difficult to find and retain, though the General Assembly did not fail to appeal to their pecuniary sense by raising pilotage fees. Yet the pilotage profession required more than a simple desire to earn a living; it demanded a special knowledge and skill of seamanship as well as the courage to cope with the unrelenting natural elements. Adding to the ordinary dangers associated with waterborne commerce were the periodic storms that ravaged the coast, one of which resulted in the deaths of two Ocracoke pilots in 1775.[19]

By the Revolution pilotage at Ocracoke had evolved into something very similar to the systems that then prevailed throughout the colony, principally at Beaufort and in the Cape Fear (and with some alterations, after independence). Commissioners at the various ports supervised pilotage, examining, licensing, and if necessary, dismissing pilots. The pilots remained responsible for answering calls of ships and notifying commissioners of contagious diseases thereon. Fees determined by the legislature rewarded the men, but performance bonds reminded the pilots to comply with their professional and legal responsibilities.

Ocracoke, meanwhile, became the only feasible inlet for North Carolina shipping above Beaufort, at least after the closing of Roanoke Inlet about 1811 and the closing of New Currituck Inlet in 1828. Pilots accordingly increased in number at Ocracoke; at mid-nineteenth century fifty seven lived on Ocracoke and in Portsmouth. However, in 1846 a storm opened Oregon and Hatteras inlets after which Hatteras Inlet shipping superseded that of Ocracoke Inlet, at least until the end of the century.

Shipping to North Carolina's northern ports declined after the Civil War, and the number of pilots reflected the trend. The Census of 1900 revealed only two pilots at Ocracoke, a faint reminder of the past when pilots looked eagerly for sail, vied contentiously for the opportunity to command the vessels, and braved the dangers of the inlet and shallow sounds to guide their craft safely to port.[20] ✣

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NOTES

1. Gary S. Dunbar, *Historical Geography of the North Carolina Outer Banks* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 1, 21, 26; David Stick, *The Outer Banks of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 1-10; Charles Christopher Crittenden, *The Commerce of North Carolina, 1763-1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), 1-2.

2. Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina*, 16 vols. (Winston and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1895-1905), XXIII, 40-42.

3. Harry Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 143-155; Herbert R. Pascal, *A History of Colonial Bath* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1955); Charles Paul, "Colonial Beaufort," *North Carolina Historical Review,* XLII (1965), 139-152; Thomas C. Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony: The History of Edenton and Chowan County* (Edenton: Chamber of Commerce, 1967),; Alonzo Thomas Dill, Jr., "Eighteenth Century New Bern: A History of the Town and Craven County, 1700-1800," *North Carolina Historical Review,* XXII (1945), 1-21, 125-151, 293-319, 460-489; E. Lawrence Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), Chapter XI.

4. Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 263, 266, 271-272; Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina,* 87-88; Robert J. Cain (ed.), *North Carolina Higher-Court Minutes, 1724-1730, The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Second Series), Vol. VI (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981), xxv.

5. Dunbar, *Historical Geography of the North Carolina Outer Banks,* 21; Crittenden, *Commerce of North Carolina,* 3-4; Stick, *Outer Banks*, 256, 274.

6. Crittenden, *Commerce of North Carolina*, 5; Willia L. Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886-1890), III, 210; Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 91-92.

7. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina,* XXIII, 40-41.

8. *Ibid.*, 41.

9. *Ibid.*, XXV, 196; An Act for facilitating the Navigation of the several Ports of this Province...., CO 5/333, fols. 24-27, British Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh. The author wishes to thank Robert J. Cain of the Division of Archives and History for the references to and a copy of the 1738/1739 law.

10. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina,* XXIII, 375-378. The General Assembly in the 1748 had voided an earlier law. *Ibid.*, 296.

11. *Ibid.*, 667-672.

12. *Ibid.*, 827.

13. Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina,* III, 184, 210, IV, 172-173. A pilot had been appointed for Roanoke Inlet in 1715, however. See Robert J. Cain (ed.), *Records of the Executive Council, 1664-1734, The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Second Series), Vol. VII (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1984), 58.

14. Robert J. Cain (ed.), *Records of the Executive Council, 1735-1754, The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Second Series), Vol. VIII (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1988), 371-373; Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 129-132.

15. An Act for facilitating the Navigation of the several Ports of this Province...., CO 5/333, fols. 24-27; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina,* XXIII, 670-672, 746. Tonnage duties imposed on ships at the various ports would underwrite the cost of purchasing the land. *Ibid.*

16. Crittenden, *Commerce of North Carolina*, 5; Stick, *Outer Banks*, 43, 304; Dunbar, *Historical Geography of the North Carolina Outer Banks,* 138, n. 21.

17. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, XXV, 252-253; Stick, *Outer Banks*, 305-306; Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, VI, 82, 339; Minutes of the Carteret County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, March 1756, May 1757, December 1758, December 1759, March 1761, North Carolina State Archives.

18. Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, IX, 803-804.

19. *The North Carolina Gazette* (New Bern), March 24, 1775.

20. Dunbar, *Historical Geography of the North Carolina Outer Banks,* 28, 140; Stick, *Outer Banks,* 8-9, 88-89, 279, 296-297. ✣

The Blount Pitcher, 18th century, is illustrated with a scene of the Shell Castle Island warehouse facility for lighters, just inside Ocracoke Inlet (NC Archives and History)

The Exeter site from Collet 1770 (NC Archives and History)

Colonial Phantom on the Northeast Cape Fear:
A Brief History of the Exeter Site

by Wilson Angley

From the early stages of European exploration and settlement of North Carolina, the lands along the Northeast Cape Fear River and its tributaries were recognized as a prime area for agricultural development and the production of lumber and naval stores. In August of 1662 the New Englander William Hilton set sail from Massachusetts Bay aboard the ship *Adventure,* bound for the Cape Fear region. After several failures to reach his appointed destination, he entered the mouth of the Cape Fear on the morning of October 4, 1662. For more than three weeks Hilton and his associates explored the stream. Taking the *Adventure* as far as present-day Wilmington, he then proceeded by small boat up the northeast branch, which he took to be a continuation of the main river. Hilton is thought to have reached a point approximately sixty miles upstream from the ocean bar; and it is evident that both he and his men were favorably impressed by the area's luxuriant vegetation and abundant game.[1]

In October of 1663 Hilton returned aboard the *Adventure* to conduct a more extensive exploration of the Cape Fear region. Again he and his men ascended the Northeast Cape Fear in a small boat; and on this second expedition names were given to landmarks and areas far upstream, including "Turkie-Quarters," "Rocky-Point," and "Stag Park"—the vast area later claimed by Governor George Burrington only a short distance upriver from a site that was to be known as Exeter. Once more the expeditionary party was palpably taken with the region: "As good tracts of land, dry well wooded, pleasant and delightful as we have seen any where in the world."[2]

Although there were several abortive attempts to establish settlements along the lower Cape Fear during the years just following the Hilton expeditions, permanent settlement did not finally begin until the mid-1720s with the coming of Maurice Moore and the laying out of Brunswick Town. Between 1726 and 1731 some 115,000 acres of Cape Fear land were acquired by a closely associated group of about three dozen men. Lands were taken up not only along the lower reaches of the stream but also along both the northwest and northeast branches. The resulting concentration of large landholdings among a relatively few wealthy and influential men went far toward establishing the plantation pattern that remained dominant in the area until the Civil War.[3]

Thus, during the half century preceding the American Revolution, vast plantations were laid off on the Northeast Cape Fear, extending far upstream from the fledgling settlement of Wilmington (formerly New Town or Newton). Moreover, the early landowners on the Northeast Cape Fear included some of the most prominent and influential men in colonial North Carolina. Landowners in the immediate vicinity of the Exeter site included Samuel Swann, John and Alexander Lillington, John Ashe, Thomas Merrick, John Porter, Edward Moseley, and John Rutherfurd.[4]

The land which would soon become the site of Exeter (originally called New Exeter) was acquired in September of 1750 by David Williams and Henry Skibbow (or Sciboe), the latter being an obscure planter and surveyor who had been a resident of New Hanover County since at least as early as 1738. Prior to his purchase of the Exeter tract, Skibbow's principal place of residence was situated in the forks of Holly Shelter Creek.[5]

The 100-acre Exeter tract was located on the east side of the Northeast Cape Fear River a short distance below Sand Hill Cove and on both sides of Jumping Run Branch. Skibbow and Williams received the grant with a standard provision that they clear and cultivate at least three acres of land within three years.[6]

Less than three years later, in April of 1753, a grant for 100 acres of land, adjoining and just above the Exeter tract, was issued to Lewis Skibbow, presumably the son or brother of Henry. Lewis Skibbow's grant also contained considerable frontage along the east bank of the Northeast Cape Fear. Its upper boundary extended from the river bank northeastward beyond the present Holly Shelter Road, and lay along part of the line which marked the lower boundary of a grant originally issued to Edward Moseley in June of 1740. This Moseley land had passed to Sampson Moseley at the death of his father in 1749, and would, in 1772, be purchased by the transplanted Scotsman, John Rutherfurd.[7]

It was on the 1750 grant to David Williams and Henry Skibbow that the town of Exeter (New Exeter) was formally incorporated in 1754. The colonial assembly was apparently encouraged by the support of certain residents

of New Hanover, Onslow, and Duplin counties, who conceived an expectation that the settlement would achieve a measure of success as a river port and center of local trade. The assembly stipulated that forty acres should be set aside for the town "on the plantation of Henry Skibbow on the east side of the north east branch of Cape Fear river, in New Hanover county, at a place called the Sand Hill."[8] The act of incorporation named as town commissioners Alexander Lillington, Samuel Ashe, Thomas Merrick, John Gardner, and Henry Skibbow himself. It further authorized these commissioners to lay off the town tract into half acre lots, "with convenient streets and squares, for a church, church yard, and market place."[9] Each purchaser of a lot was required, within two years,

> to build a good substantial habitable framed or brick house, of not less dimensions than 20 feet in length, and 16 feet wide, besides sheds and leantoes, or make preparation for so doing, as the commissioners, or a majority of them, shall think reasonable.[10]

Despite the sanguine hopes of its promoters, Exeter seems to have stumbled in the very threshold of development. An examination of the New Hanover County deeds of this period reveals not a single transaction from any of the town commissioners which can be identified as conveying a town lot. Unfortunately, too, the court minutes for New Hanover County do not survive from the period 1742-1758, so that this potentially valuable source of information sheds no light on the years during which development activities at Exeter might have been at their height.

Notwithstanding the lack of documentary evidence for the sale of town lots, Exeter was designated as an official customs inspection point in 1755, only one year after its incorporation. The "Act for the Inspection of Pork, Beef, Rice, Indigo, Tar, Pitch, Turpentine, Staves, Headings, Shingles, and Lumber" named the new town along with Brunswick, Wilmington, and New Topsail Sound as the places of inspection in New Hanover County.[11]

Henry Skibbow himself appears to have moved away from the Exeter area within a few years of the town's incorporation. He later died intestate in Onslow County, at which time Lewis Skibbow acted as administrator of his modest estate.[12]

Despite its apparent lack of development, Exeter was again designated in 1758 as an inspection point for customs in New Hanover County, along with Brunswick, Wilmington, and New Topsail Sound; and in 1761 the county court appointed John Gardner, original treasurer of the town commissioners, to act as customs inspector there.[13] In 1764, however, certain members of the upper house of the colonial assembly raised objections to Exeter's continuing designation as a place of inspection, on the basis of its commercial insignificance:

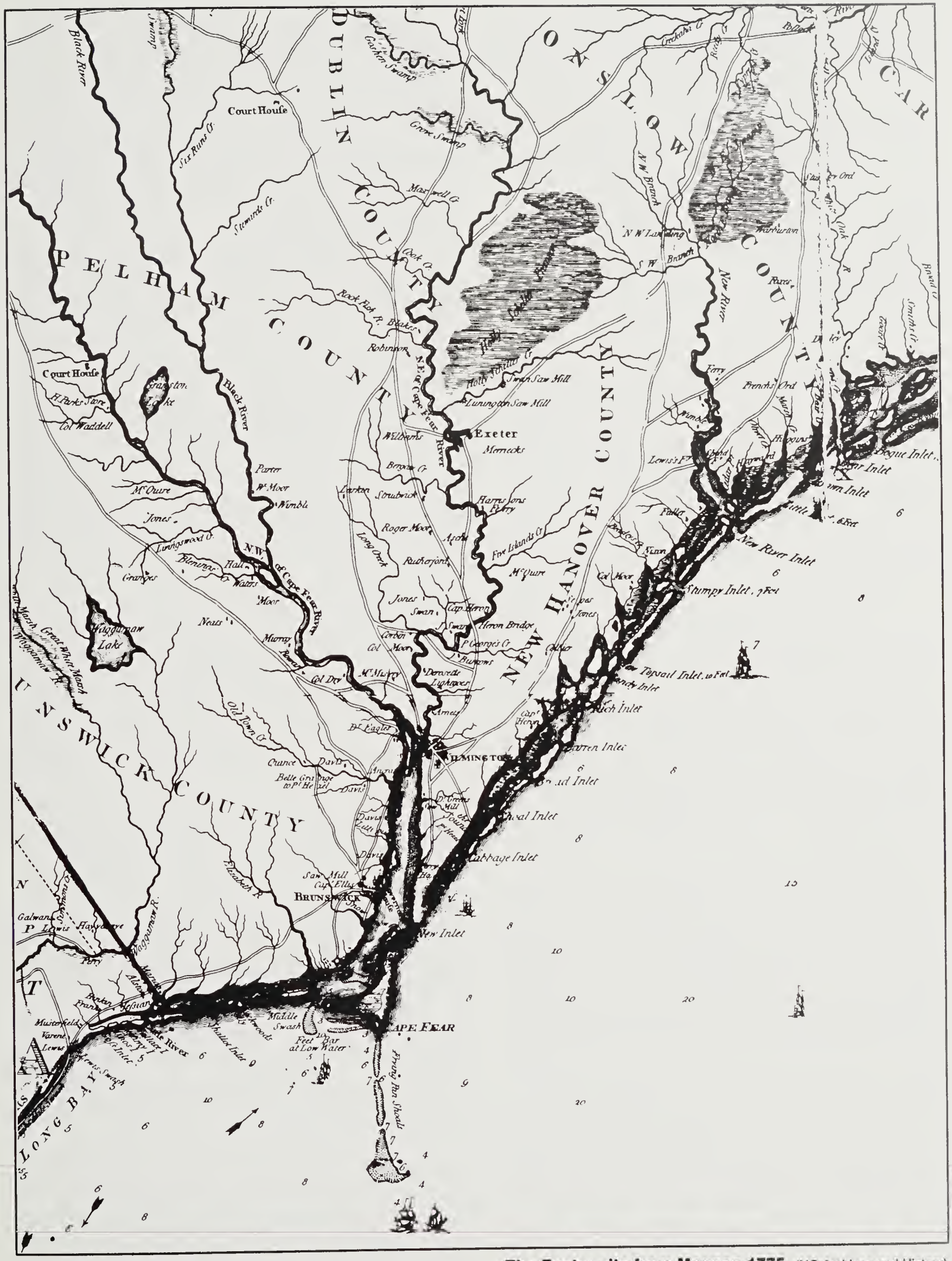
> We are of Opinion, that New Exeter being a place of no Note or Business, is improper for a place of Inspection [and] that the insertion of it [by the lower house], cannot answer, any publick Good, though it may [serve] the...interests of Individuals[,] and that therefore it should be dele[te]d.[14]

It was only at the insistence of members of the lower house that Exeter retained its apparently dubious status as an inspection point for a few more years.[15]

The act of 1764 was to be the last in which Exeter was named as a customs inspection point. In similar legislation of 1770, Exeter was deleted from the list of such places; and in 1784 the town of South Washington, further upriver, was included for the first time.[16] The exclusion of Exeter from the customs legislation of 1770 and 1784 would seem to indicate that the town was never a port of major consequence. It may have been a river landing of some local significance, however, at least until the rise of South Washington.[17]

Despite the paucity of documentary evidence concerning the development of Exeter, the town evidently had been laid off by 1760. In October of that year John Ashe, planter, sold to John Gardner, merchant and original treasurer of the town commissioners, a 290-acre tract of apparently unimproved land just south of the 1750 grant to Henry Skibbow and David Williams. Ashe himself had acquired this tract in 1754. The property description in the 1760 conveyance referred to:"...all that Plantation tract or parcel of land...on the North East branch of Cape Fear River on the lower side of the tract where New Exeter is laid out."[18] Although this deed reveals that Exeter had at least been "laid out" by 1760, it is perhaps significant that no indication is given of an actual settlement. Another documentary reference to Exeter was recorded in 1772, when Sampson Moseley sold seven tracts of land to John Rutherfurd. One of those tracts was described as "Beginning at a pine on the river side near Exeter...."[19]

The evidence provided by eighteenth century maps is somewhat more revealing with regard to the rather brief existence of Exeter as a settlement and local trade center. The Moseley Map of 1733, drawn by local resident Edward Moseley, was produced two decades prior to the incorporation of Exeter and gives no indication of settlement at the site. At this time water apparently furnished the sole means of transportation for settlers as far upriver as the future location of Exeter. The town first appears on the Collet Map of 1770. By this time a road extended all along the western side of the Northeast Cape Fear.



The Exeter site from Mouzon 1775 (NC Archives and History)

Another road, on the east side of the river, extended northward from Harrison's ferry to Exeter, thence northeastward across Holly Shelter Creek to join the road leading from Wilmington to New Bern. The Collet Map not only documents the location and existence of Exeter, but also indicates the presence of seven structures there. The Mouzon Map of 1775 indicates the presence of eleven structures at Exeter. The roads in the area had not changed appreciably during the previous five years, except that a road was now shown connecting the north-south road to the west of the river with the river bank directly opposite Exeter. It is, therefore, very likely that a ferry was in operation at Exeter prior to the American Revolution.[20]

During the final stages of the Revolution, the port of Wilmington became a place of considerable strategic importance to both the British and Patriot forces. In late January of 1781, a British fleet sailed up the Cape Fear bringing a force of about 450 British troops under Major James Craig. With little or no opposition, Craig's forces seized Wilmington and began a prolonged occupation. From time to time, during the course of this occupation, Craig dispatched expeditionary forces into the surrounding countryside, including the area on the Northeast Cape Fear in the vicinity of Exeter.[21]

Craig and his forces were engaged in fortifying positions in and around Wilmington when General Charles Cornwallis's troops arrived in town on April 7, 1781. Cornwallis remained for only a little more than two weeks, however, before starting his long march northward into Virginia. This march led him along the western side of the Northeast Cape Fear and brought widespread destruction in its wake. Exeter is indicated on the William Faden Map of the Cornwallis march, published in 1785, but it is clear that the main body of British troops passed northward along the western side of the Northeast Cape Fear. Although plantations were laid waste across the river, Exeter, presumably, was spared.[22]

After Cornwallis's departure, Craig continued his activities in Wilmington and the surrounding area. One of his outlying fortifications along the Northeast Cape Fear was constructed as far away as John Rutherfurd's mill on Ashe's Creek, only a short distance upriver from Exeter. It is, therefore, almost certain that Exeter was involved in the various movements of Craig's troops. It is also quite possible that Exeter was a river landing of some importance to the Patriot militia forces under the command of General Alexander Lillington, a resident of the area.[23]

By the end of the eighteenth century, if not well before, the plan to establish a permanent settlement at Exeter had apparently gone aglimmering. Probably, this development was hastened by the rise of South Washington only a few miles upriver, although South Washington itself was of very limited importance in its original location.[24] A 1794 survey of the area between Merrick's Creek to the south and Ashe's Creek to the north records the location of Exeter in a general way, but indicates no structures there. Mills were indicated at this time on both Ashe's Creek ("Ashes Mill") and Lillington Creek ("General Lillington Mill"); Jumping Run Branch was not shown.[25] Exeter did not appear on the Price-Strother Map of 1808. Nor was the Exeter site in any way indicated on the "Plan of Part of Holly Shelter Swamp," prepared by H. B. Brazier in 1827 for the state Board of Internal Improvements.[26]

Documentary references to the Exeter site are vague as to the extent of its development; but it is clear that the 100-acre tract originally granted to Henry Skibbow and David Williams was being divided and sold by the end of the eighteenth century. In a transaction between one James Fentress and the blacksmith John Player, in October of 1798, specific reference was made to the inclusion of a large portion of the Exeter town site.[27] Moreover, in December of 1798, Player was authorized by the county court "to keep a ferry over the North East River at a place called Exeter with the same fees as at the big Bridge [i.e., Heron's Bridge, several miles downriver].[28] If Player actually operated this ferry, as authorized, he did not do so for long. By October of 1801 Player was dead, and his modest estate was sold at public auction.[29]

In December of 1822 one Boney Player sold to Staten Meeks 125 acres of land formerly owned by John Player. The recited consideration was only sixty dollars. This land included the 100 acres granted to Lewis Skibbow in 1753 and twenty five acres of the original Henry Skibbow and David Williams grant.[30] Staten Meeks died in 1848, leaving as heirs his wife and four children. Their descendants would retain possession of the Exeter site well into the twentieth century.[31]

By 1946 the area along the Northeast Cape Fear from Sand Hill Cove past the mouth of Jumping Run Branch (1.8 miles of river frontage) was embraced within the 48,000 acres comprising the Holly Shelter Wildlife Management Area. This area of the river bank, especially the upper portion, was described as being an elevated sandy ridge, with its steepest declivity near the spot where a lodge had been constructed. It was noted that this short stretch of shoreline was distinctive for its white sand and the preponderance of oak, hickory, and other hardwood trees. It was also noted that the sloping banks along this section of the river provided "an ideal feeding ground" for deer.[32] It is not likely that these factors would have been overlooked by those who contemplated a settlement in the area nearly two centuries earlier.

Only a few years ago, the prospect of at last locating the colonial town of Exeter lured a contingent of the state's Underwater Archaeology Unit from their base of operations at Kure Beach. True, no one had stumbled upon any onshore remnants of the elusive settlement, but perhaps evidence of maritime activity could be located

beneath the murky waters of the Northeast Cape Fear. Armed with this writer's historical information and with the latest technologies for the detection of submerged anomalies, these modern-day argonauts conducted a careful survey of the shoreline area where Exeter is believed to have stood. In the fullness of time, a hugh magnetic disturbance inspired hopes that an eighteenth-century shipwreck had indeed been found; but an ensuing examination of the large and intriguing object proved more than disappointing. The potential shipwreck was, in fact, a 1983 Toyota truck, which had been stolen from its owner and later consigned by the thief to a watery grave. After more than two centuries, the essential attributes and ultimate fate of Exeter remain unknown.[33] ✣

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NOTES

1. E. Lawrence Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 31-32.

2. *Ibid.*, 38.

3. *Ibid.*, 101-102.

4. Margaret M. Hofmann, comp., *Province of North Carolina, 1663-1729: Abstracts of Land Patents* (Waldon: Roanoke News Co., (1979), 87 and 100; Eric Norden Collection and Eric Norden Map Collection, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh; Moseley Map (1733), Collet Map (1770), and Mouzon Map (1775), North Carolina State Archives; Janet Schaw, *Journal of A Lady of Quality,* edited by Evangeline W. Andrews and Charles M. Andrews (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 184-185, 296-298, and *passim;* and map of "Plantations on the Lower Cape Fear, 1725-1760," in Alfred M. Waddell, *A History of New Hanover County and the Lower Cape Fear Region, 1723-1800* (Wilmington: [1909]), facing p. 38.

5. New Hanover County Deeds, Book C, p. 268.

6. Office of the Secretary of State of North Carolina. Land Grant Office, Book 5, p. 406 and Book 10, p. 258. See also pertinent material in Eric Norden Collection and Eric Norden Map Collection.

7. Eric Norden Collection; Eric Norden Map Collection; Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality,* 297-299; and J. Bryan Grimes, ed. and comp., *North Carolina Wills and Inventories....*(Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1912), 313-319. Edward Moseley's will described this land as "Lying between Holly Shelter Creek and the bald white Sand hills" (later called Exeter Sand Hills).

8. Walter Clark, ed., *State Records of North Carolina,* 16 vols. (Winston and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1895-1905), XXV, 268-270. See also William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina,* 10 vols. (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886-1890), V, 183-187, 199, 201, 203-206, and 208; and Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days,* 143.

9. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina,* XXV, 268-270.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 373.

12. See New Hanover County Deeds, Book D, p. 397; and Onslow County Estates Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Henry Skibbow folder. Skibbow's estates papers consist of only one undated document, listing the items comprising his estate. There is no mention whatsoever of Exeter. Although the date of Skibbow's death is unknown, it must have occurred before 1790. He was not listed in the first federal census that year.

13. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina,* XXV, 379; and Alexander M. Walker, ed. and comp., *New Hanover County, North Carolina. Inferior Courts of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1738-1800* (Bethesda, Maryland: A.M. Walker, 1958), part 1, p. 45.

14. Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina,* VI, 1116.

15. Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina,* VI, 1123. See also p. 1195.

16. Clark, *State Records of North Carolina,* XXIII, 791; and XXIV, 581. See also Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days,* 143.

17. South Washington was situated on Washington Creek near its confluence with the Northeast Cape Fear. It was laid out as early as 1740 for the Welsh Tract. In 1791 it was incorporated as South Washington, but about 1840 was moved approximately 1 1/2 miles southwest to a site on the newly completed railroad. Its name at the new site was changed to Hiawatha, and has since become simply Watha. See William S. Powell, *The North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 467.

18. New Hanover County Deeds, Book D, p. 470.

19. Eric Norden Collection.

20. See Moseley Map (1733), Collet Map (1770), and Mouzon Map (1775), North Carolina State Archives.

21. Hugh F. Rankin, *North Carolina in the American Revolution* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1959), 61.

22. See the William Faden map of "The Marches of Lord Cornwallis in the Southern Provinces....," published in 1785. Copy in the North Carolina State Archives.

23. Rankin, *North Carolina in the American Revolution,* 64-65. For the location of "Craig's Fieldworks" at Rutherfurd's Mill, see map in Waddell's *History of New Hanover County,* facing p. 38.

24. Lee, *The Lower Cape Fear in Colonial Days,* 143.

25. See survey by Joseph Dickson in Eric Norden Map Collection.

26. See Price-Strother Map (1808), North Carolina State Archives; and survey by Robert H.B. Brazier in Eric Norden Map Collection.

27. New Hanover County Deeds, Book L 2, p.735.

28. Walker, *New Hanover County...Courts of Pleas and Quarter Sessions,* part 4, p. 79.

29. New Hanover County Estates Papers, John Player folder. Sales of Player's estate were held on 9 October 1801 and 6 April 1803. There was no mention of Exeter or of ferry equipment.

30. New Hanover County Deeds, Book X, p. 448. This deed was not registered until 1839.

31. For the will of Staten Meeks, see New Hanover County Wills, Book A B, p. 482, North Carolina State Archives.

32. B.W. Wells, *Vegetation of Holly Shelter Wildlife Management Area* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, 1946), 33-34 and 38.

33. For a more detailed account of this expedition by one of the participants, see Mark Wilde-Ramsing, "Another Fine Wreck You've Gotten Us In!," *North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Newsletter* (Winter 1992), 22. ✣

REPORTS *from the* FIELD

Beaufort Historical Association

OLD BURYING GROUND RECEIVES RESTORATION ATTENTION...

The Beaufort Historical Association recently completed a project to repair and restore thirty grave markers and replace fencing in the Old Burying Ground on Ann Street. The cemetery was deeded to the town in 1731 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It attracts thousands of visitors year-round who come to research their ancestry or are simply curious about the families and folklore of early coastal North Carolina.

The restoration project included twenty wooden markers that were carefully removed and dried before cleaning and treating with epoxy consolidants. Some markers had deteriorated below ground and were restored to full length by doweling and epoxing juniper ends to the existing marker. The markers were then soaked in preservative for added protection.

Ten stone markers were restored by cleaning, brushing, and rejoining pieces by threading with nylon rods and epoxy. Careful consideration was given to the color of the bonding agent so that the repair closely approximated the original stone color. Markers at the graves of Caroline Guthrie and Elisabeth Ann Davis were included in this phase of the project. A brownstone marker that was broken during the severe storm of March 13, 1993, was similarly repaired.

The base for a cross on the Sarah King and Annie Beaureguard Gabriel grave was doweled and epoxied. Stones for graves of Margaret and Eliza Ann Pigott, Hetty Harker, Don Carlos Martin, and Captain John Hill had to be reattached to their bases. Beaufort-style wooden fences around the Davis and Whitehurst family plots were replaced.

The thirty-five hundred dollar project was funded in part by a Certified Local Government grant through the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Matching funds were provided by the Beaufort Historical Association and the Town of Beaufort. Additional funds were donated by Tom Davis and brothers, of Selma, to help offset the cost of the Davis wooden fence.

Work was done by Dean A. Ruedrich of Ruedrich Restoration of Raleigh, with the assistance of Peter Sandbeck, Restoration Specialist in the Eastern Office of the Division of Archives and History.

Millie Barbee, BHA Executive Director, notes that although the Town of Beaufort owns the Old Burying Ground, it is maintained by the Beaufort Historical Association. BHA volunteers and staff are responsible for much of the maintenance, as well as regular guided tours for the public. The Old Burying Ground Coordinator is Ralph Willis of Beaufort, who volunteers year-round and who spent many hours on the restoration project. He was assisted by Joe Johnson, a skilled woodworker and co-owner of the Pecan Tree Inn who donated his time to make the replacement fences. Lodging for persons working on this project was provided by the North Carolina Maritime Museum at their Harborside Annex.

For more information contact Lianne Keeney or Lisa Stockard at the BHA office, (919) 728-5225, Monday through Saturday, between 9 am and 4:30 pm. Tax exempt donations may be mailed to PO Box 1709, Beaufort, NC, 28516-0363.

North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Unit

CAPE FEAR RIVER SUBJECT STUDY...

In cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU) has started a one-year study of the Cape Fear River navigation channel from Wilmington to the river's mouth. This study was prompted by a proposal to widen and deepen this thirty-four-mile stretch of the river. As the initial phase of this project, Mr. Claude "Sandy" Jackson has been hired by the UAU to undertake a historic and cartographic investigation of the lower Cape Fear River. The study will produce:

- *A comprehensive historical overview of the Cape Fear River*
- *Annotated maps of the river that show areas of maritime activity (i.e. historic and recent river channels, landings, and ferries; and, plantation, mill, and industrial sites)*
- *Historically documented and known shipwreck sites*
- *Historic river depths and dredging activity*
- *Areas previously documented by submerged cultural resource surveys.*

Based on the results of the historic and cartographic research, remote sensing surveys will be conducted on various portions of the river channel. These surveys will use a magnetometer, side scan sonar, or a combination of the two. While the remote sensing survey is in progress, a dive team will examine located targets. It is anticipated that by the end of the field work, a preliminary assessment can be made concerning the identification of remote sensing targets and sites that require further investigation to determine their significance and eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

For more information contact Sandy Jackson at the Underwater Archaeology Lab in Fort Fisher, (919) 458-9042.

Hidden Beneath the Waves...

The underwater archaeology educational program entitled "Hidden Beneath the Waves" is designed to provide an exciting hands-on classroom experience. Targeted for eighth-grade students, the program is a self-contained outreach kit that provides video presentations, historical research exercises, quiz games, and–the highlight of the program–artifacts and a four-foot model of an actual wreck lying on the bottom of the Cape Fear River. Using their knowledge gained during the program, students will attempt to discover the identity of the "Mystery Wreck." A comprehensive teacher's guide allows the program to be administered solely by the classroom teacher.

"Hidden Beneath the Waves" is a cooperative venture between the Cape Fear Museum and the North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Unit that is being developed and tested during the 1993/94 school year in the New Hanover public school system. Corporate sponsorship by Chemserve Terminal, Inc. and other local businesses have provided a budget of nearly two thousand dollars for the development phase. At the completion of this period, one or more outreach kits will be available for use by eighth-grade classes in the Cape Fear area. In the future, other areas in coastal North Carolina will be encouraged to adapt the program and tailor it to their region and maritime history.

For more information contact Mark Wilde-Ramsing at the Underwater Archaeology Lab in Fort Fisher, (919) 458-9042.

North Carolina Maritime Museum

Shad Boat Built by George Washington Creef Among Museum's Latest Acquisitions...

The museum recently acquired the *Tom Dixon,* a fine example of the work of George Washington Creef, noted boatbuilder of Wanchese, and recognized as the originator of the North Carolina shad boat. The *Dixon* is a twenty-eight-foot sailing shad boat built in 1887. Although converted to engine power after the turn of this century, the boat's mast step is still in place and the slot for the centerboard, which was plugged up when the sailing rig was removed, is plainly evident. Despite the obvious signs of her age and some hull damage, the boat's clean lines reveal a handsome, seakindly hull, and the high level of craftsmanship for which her builder is known.

Plans for the shad boat include recording the details of construction and hull shape, construction of a special supporting cradle to prevent further deterioration of the hull integrity, and comparative studies with other shad boats. An estimated eighty percent of the hull structure appears to be original or from the first twenty years of the boat's life. Because restoration would necessitate replacing a major portion of that material with the subsequent loss of potentially significant data, treatment of the hull will be limited to stabilizing techniques.

Both the design and construction of the shad boat appear to be a true North Carolina "invention." Creef's construction is a unique blend of boatbuilding methods that would seem to derive from early logboats and conventionally built boats of the time.

The 1987 General Assembly designated the shad boat as the official "state boat," a symbol of the role that small craft played in the economic life of the state. Among the proponents of that idea was Earl Willis, Jr., who donated the *Tom Dixon* to the museum.

With the acquisition of the *Dixon,* the museum now has a significant collection of shad boats showing a wide range of age and styles. Examples now include twenty-six and thirty-two-foot engine-powered boats built by Otis Dough, a twenty-five-foot deadrise style, and a round-stern, mailboat version. The Creef boat, one of only four known to survive, is the earliest and only sailing version in the collection.

For more information contact Michael Alford at the North Carolina Maritime Museum, (919) 728-7317.

East Carolina University

North Carolina Maritime History Projects...

Students in the Program in Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology conducted research on several North Carolina projects in 1993. These included site

inspections of a Civil War vessel, a possible Revolutionary War vessel, an eighteenth century shipyard, and a survey of part of the Pamlico River's north shore. The projects involved a cooperative effort between East Carolina and the Underwater Archaeology Unit, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, **Thomas Macknight**, a prominent Currituck County citizen, operated a shipyard on Indian Town Creek. During the Revolution, Macknight ran afoul of the rebellion and was forced to flee. He would later claim that he had built warehouses and wharfs and boasted "the most commodious, and I will venture to say the best shipyard in the province."

ECU graduate student Jeff Morris investigated the traditional site of the Macknight Shipyard under the supervision of Mark Wilde-Ramsing (UAU) and Larry Babits (ECU). They recovered significant structural information, however, most of the material, including submerged timbers, appears more typical of the late nineteenth century lumber yard and mill that occupied the site. An early sailing vessel, a small flat, and the remains of a small motorized boat were found in close association with the site.

Although the on-site inspection did not confirm the site as the Macknight Shipyard, documentary research and survey work are continuing. It is possible that the actual site may be located a short distance away because Macknight owned more land along the creek bank. Later this fall, other potential creekside sites will be inspected to determine whether or not they match the extensive description of the yard provided by Macknight.

The **Johns Island Wreck** near Edenton was thought to be the *Holy Heart of Jesus,* a ship that carried arms and ammunition to the Americans during the Revolution. Graduate student Adriane Askins conducted an investigation of the site in early June, assisted by UAU. The week-long inspection recorded basic details of the ship and recovered a limited number of artifacts.

The vessel remains indicated a three masted, 106-foot-long vessel with a beam of about thirty feet. Artifacts suggest a date after the American Revolution and construction materials tend to rule out the *Holy Heart of Jesus.* However, as a southern-built, late eighteenth/early nineteenth century vessel, it may be even more important than first thought. North Carolina ships dating from that period are not well understood.

The Johns Island Wreck has the potential for providing crucial information about the shift to the use of centerboards, which appeared about 1820. An odd mast step and the remnants of a galley stove, which are still being examined, are unusual features of the wreck. Artifacts related to the galley area include a quantity of food remains including pig, fish, and cow bones as well as peach pits. Askins is continuing her thesis research and writing on this site.

A wreck believed to be the ***Scuppernong,*** a vessel built in Elizabeth City in 1853, was investigated by graduate student Lex Turner. Richard Lawrence (UAU) and Gordon Watts (ECU) supervised the project. The ship, which was carrying live oak timbers for a Confederate shipyard at Deep Creek, was burned by Union troops in 1862. The site was located in Indian Town Creek in Currituck County.

Selected portions of the hull were excavated to provide specific details about the bow, stern, and mast steps. Additional excavation recovered a small number of artifacts and provided evidence of extensive burning. Based on a length of seventy-seven feet and beam of seventeen feet, evidence of burning, and the presence of unfinished ship timbers, the identity of the *Scuppernong* seems confirmed.

Research is also underway to locate sites along the **Pamlico River**. As part of a long-term research project, East Carolina University Professor Larry Babits is conducting a search along the north shore of the Pamlico River east of Bath. The project will record land sites eroding into the river as well as abandoned, derelict, and wrecked vessels found in the water. The project is funded by a North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Survey and Planning Grant.

Inspired by an article on **periaugers** in *Tributaries* (Vol. 2, No. 1), graduate student Harry Pecorelli conducted research directly related to early North Carolina and southeastern watercraft. Contemporary documents were studied to determine if differences in terminology might be meaningful. In particular, Pecorelli looked into the terms, *petiauger, periauger,* and *scout boat,* as used in the eighteenth century.

Research reveals that petiauger and scout boat are terms used about the same time while periauger is an earlier usage. One hypothesis, based on linguistic evidence, is that periauger might refer to boats dug out of logs and petiauger to boats "spread or divided." If so the distinction could be crucial in identifying the construction technique in which the log is split and a plank placed between the two halves.

For more information contact Larry Babits at the Eller Building (Maritime History), East Carolina University, (919) 757-6788.

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